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ISSN 0745-4570

COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE®

OCTOBER 31, 2003 #1563

DELL'S MELVIN MONSTER!

Learn more about John Stanley's other series! Ask Mr. Silver Age, Page 30

More treats and no tricks in this issue!

Marvel stock approaches $30

Marvel Enterprises stock approached $30 on Oct. 9, when it closed at $28.52. This marks the highest point for the stock in the last five years.

The company had raised its quarterly earnings target, citing improvements in its licensing of films, toys, and games based on The Hulk, Spider-Man, and Daredevil. Marvel announced it expects to post a third-quarter profit of 37-41¢ per share, up from its original target of 25-30¢ per share. It also said it expected its sales to be between $84 and $87 million, up from its original expectation of $60-65 million.

Over the last year, Marvel's stock has nearly tripled in price, due in part to the success of its characters in theatrical releases and through other licensing ventures. The week's Marvel stock surge occurred even as rumors were spreading about an executive repositioning at the company. ✦

THE A LIST

Human Target #2
Batman Adventures: Dangerous Dames & Demons TPB
Wake the Dead #1
Gotham Central #6-10
Megaman #1
Doc Ock: Negative Exposure #1
Fables: The Last Castle

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ACTOR announces plans!

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THE GUIDE

Chuck Rozanski dusts off an old letter!

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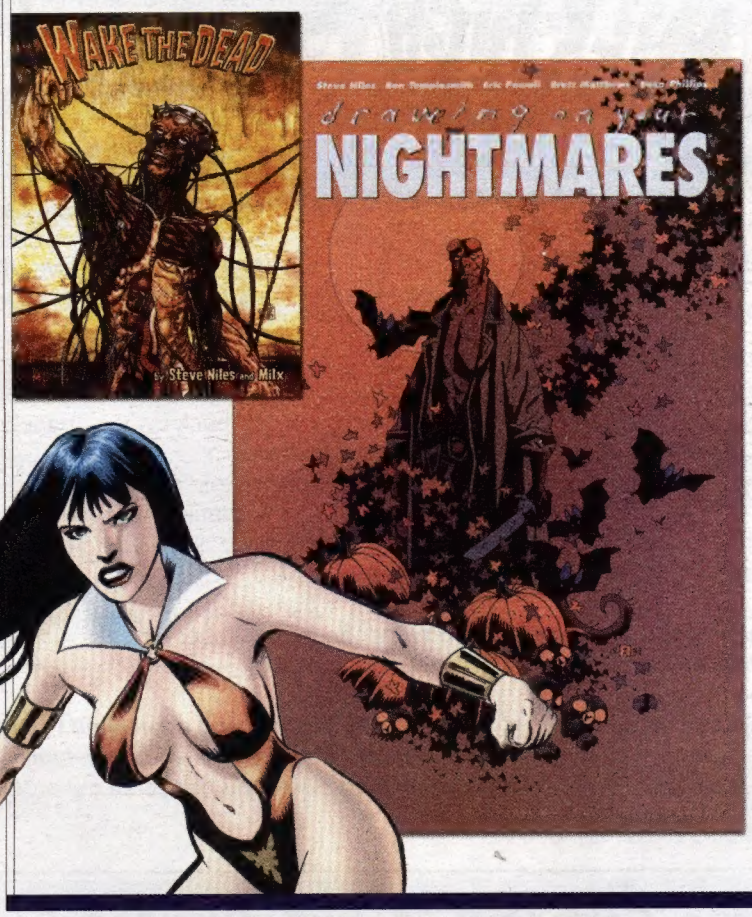
PLAYING TRICKS WITH HORROR IS EDITORS' TREAT!



by Nathan Melby

With Halloween here, the *Hellboy* movie just around the corner, an ongoing horror line from Dark Horse, two straight vampire hits from IDW Publishing, a strong line from Vertigo, and *Vampirella* going to magazine format, horror comics editors find themselves with much to be happy about. But are horror comics actually *fun* to edit?

"I grew up on a steady diet of H.P. Lovecraft and Stephen King, so this has always been the stuff that I really loved," Dark Horse Comics Editor Scott Allie told ***CBG***. "When I was in college, I put together an anthology of horror comics that was pretty bad — but, when I moved out West, I self-published a horror comics anthology where I wrote everything for various artists. That was the first real comics work I did. After that, it feels that getting this horror line going is me getting back to what I was trying to do in the first place."

IDW Publishing Editor in Chief Jeff Marriotte told ***CBG*** that he has always been a big fan of horror — and that that led to his writing, which earned him a nomination for a Bram Stoker Award for horror fiction.

DC's Karen Berger developed an entire spin-off line building from DC's more fantastic characters — a line that recently celebrated a decade that includes such dark titles as *Hellblazer* and *Lucifer*.

And one of the most recognizable female characters in comics, Vampirella, recently moved to a new, magazine format. "Vampirella definitely has her own way, so it is not *straight* horror, but I try to play it like that, because I like that kind of stuff," *Vampirella* Editor Maureen McTigue told ***CBG***. "The sexiness of the character is just natural, so we have to build horror story around her."

There's more about scary stuff on **Page 12.**

This issue was shipped October 13

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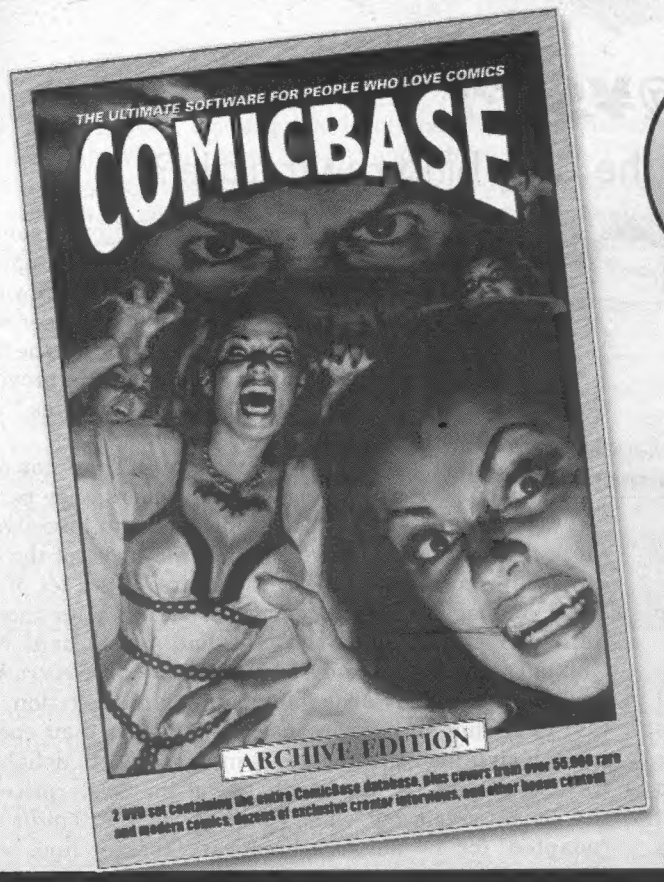
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#1563 VOLUME 33 NUMBER 44

OCTOBER 31, 2003

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Comics Buyer's Guide (ISSN 0745-4570) is published weekly for $38.95 per year by Krause Publications, Inc., 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990. Periodical class postage paid at Iola, WI 54945, and additional mailing offices. Canadian agreement number: 40665675. **Printed in the USA. Postmaster:** Send address changes to **Comics Buyer's Guide**, 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54945.

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EDITORIAL

%#@¥$+?!

How about dang blast the ding bing rowrbazzle?

Maggie **Thompson**

When I answered the phone, I was plunged into the midst of an impassioned message conveying the caller's frustrated anger over a trend that, frankly, has been around for years — and not just in comics. The caller, however, contended that the trend has now begun to defeat good comic-book storytelling and asked whether I agreed.

I don't know. Maybe it's just that I got past the shock years ago. Maybe it's that I skip material that doesn't interest me, and — since this sort of thing doesn't interest me — I usually put aside a comic book with a writer who indulges him- or herself at the expense of plot or simple enjoyable reading. But the comic book the caller cited was one I'd reviewed favorably.

It's true I'd been annoyed by that chunk of script, but, in retrospect, the annoyance hadn't been enough to spoil what had been an otherwise enjoyable story. So what was the problem? The caller was right. This big-push graphic novel from a major publisher had set up its opening with a sequence in which — apparently to convey a world in which its inhabitants were discouraged — speech balloons were littered with obscenities and defecatory remarks.

Maybe the scripter thought that that would send a needed message from the start that the comic book was not intended for children. But (a) there was no need for such language, (b) the story was not intrinsically of an adult nature, though its complexity would discourage younger readers, and (c) the only artistic function I can think of for its use was a sort of desperate attempt to hold a bored reader's attention until the story began — which happened quickly enough not to need the opening.

In comics — until the underground comix so exhilarated writers who experienced no editorial control that they got a kick out of printing the unprintable — writers and artists quickly came up with a device. In *Backstage at the Strips*, newspaper strip creator Mort Walker made up a term for the first line of this week's editorial heading. He provided such terms as, "jarns," "quimps," "nittles," and "grawlixes" for the varied symbols.

Such devices work two ways. They not only open access to a story for all readers, they permit those (like me) with a wide access to invective to fill in *far* more imaginative cussing than most of the creators have come up with. Because, frankly, a lot of the "bad" language in today's comics is striking in its unoriginality. Trying to show that the bad guy is bad? Neil Gaiman's Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemaar in *Neverwhere* don't chat endlessly about intercourse and excretion, but they're chilling in part *because* they conduct their speech in such civil fashion. And restraint can lead to delightful turns of phrase. (It was hardly one of the masterpieces of the silver screen, but when *Smokey and the Bandit* was "adapted" for TV network broadcast, coarser lines were evolved to humorous effect because of the novelty: "Gosh damn it," was the line — in place of a bleep. And the audience knew exactly what the character actually meant.

There is, of course, a flip side. *South Park: Bigger Longer & Uncut* was staggeringly packed with forbidden phrases to often hilarious effect — but that was the *point*. Pete Seeger used to address the children attending his folk music concerts, if he was about to sing something with strong language, "You have to *save* those words so they *count*."

Exactly. ✦

LETTERS

Letters **To The Editor**

WHAT *ELSE* WAS WRONG?

Peter Laird
Mirage Studios

I noticed Maggie Thompson's review of the book *500 Great Comic Book Action Heroes* in ***CBG*** #1560 and had to send in my 2¢ worth.

While pursuing one of my favorite pastimes — bookstore browsing — I always keep a lookout for interesting books about comics. (There aren't that many, but occasionally one finds a gem.) So, when in Barnes and Noble last month, *500 Great Comic Book Action Heroes* by Mike Conroy caught my eye. It helped that this book is also in one of my favorite formats — thick, squat, colorful and profusely illustrated. (The book measures seven inches by seven inches and is one inch thick.) A colorful cover with bold title type and small reproductions of some famous comic book covers sucked me right in, and I picked it up and started thumbing through it.

One of the tests to which I put these kinds of books (to help me evaluate their value to me as well-written and well-researched) is, if the book purports to be an overview and/or history of comics in general, I look to see how they treat the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. I think it's fair to say that *TMNT* has a significant place in the history of comics. So, if one of these books either ignores *TMNT* entirely or gets whatever information it does include very wrong, I generally use that as a pretty good indicator that I should pass on that book. In other words, if a book says "*TMNT* was created in Northampton, MA," or "Eastman and Laird tried to get Marvel or DC to publish *TMNT* before they decided to self-publish it," I have to ask — what *else* did they get wrong?

So there I was, thumbing through *500 Great Comic*

CBG **OTHER OPINIONS**

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Book Action Heroes, enjoying the lovely parade of covers and interior art reproductions and intrigued by the structure of the book, which included a large number of what seemed on first glance to be interesting little essays about various important aspects of comics history as well as a kind of running encyclopedia-style listing of various comics characters. I didn't see *TMNT* mentioned anywhere during this cursory examination, but, as I did see mentions of books like *Spawn, Cerebus, Elfquest, Grimjack*, and *DNAgents*, I figured that, once I sat down with the book and read through it carefully, I'd find something about *TMNT*. My mistake.

I should have listened to my initial misgivings about the book, when I saw that it had no index (almost always an indicator of sloppy scholarship and/or poor writing, in my opinion). Instead, I did my "impulse purchase" thing and bought the book.

While I haven't read *every* word in the book — and thus have *maybe* missed a mention of *TMNT* — I have given it a couple of careful page-by-page perusals, paying special attention to any sections having to do with independent comics or the period of the 1980s. As far as I can see, there is no mention *anywhere* in the book that there was ever a comic book called *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* ... even in the three-page section beginning on page 74 titled "Rise of the Independents," which covers comics like *Cerebus, Elfquest, Aztec Ace*, and *Pudge, Girl Blimp* — and comics publishers like First, Eclipse, Dark Horse, and Comico. You would think that somewhere in there a mention — even if just the title — of the book that is at least widely credited with kicking off the "Black and White Explosion" (a significant period in comics' history) would be appropriate. But it's not there.

Ordinarily, I would let this go without comment, accept it as another $18.95 none-too-wisely spent, and just put this book in the book sale box. But then I came to something that really irked me and, even more than the non-mention of *TMNT*, made me seriously question the writer's perspective, knowledge of comics history, and analytic ability. This was the line in question, referring to Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* and Image Comics (in a kind of sub-headline of a section titled "Spawn: From Assassin to Hellspawn"): "The first truly successful comic book creation in more than 30 years came, not from either of the big two publishers, but from an upstart company formed by seven creators who wished to control their own destinies."

I had to read this line several times to be sure I was reading it correctly, and it still boggles my mind. I have to ask — what is this writer's definition of a "truly successful" comic-book creation? While there is no question that Todd has had great success with *Spawn*, the *TMNT* have had a long-running animated show (more than 250 episodes), a huge variety of licensed products (including an action-figure line that ruled that category for several years), three live-action movies (the first of which set a record for highest-grossing independently produced film), and several successful comic-book lines and is now experiencing a *second* wave of success with a new animated show, two new comics lines, a line of action figures, and lots more licensed merchandise.

If this isn't "truly successful," what the *hell* is?

LET TITLES END

Kim Metzger
2223 Wayside Dr.
Fort Wayne, IN 46818

Regarding the cancellation of *Harley Quinn* and The Captain's comments on same in ***CBG*** #1561: Has it occurred to anyone else how possible it is for comic books, like TV shows, to hit a point after which they lose quality, and never quite regain it? And, as with television series, it often happens after a member of the original creative team departs.

While Harley's character was murderously insane when her series began, there was also an element of fun to her that made the title amusing, dark reading. Then, her original artists and, later (and worse), her writer left. The fun was gone. Now, so is the series. It might be time to consider taking the *Sandman/Starman* route more often in comics. That is, when whoever was responsible for the popularity of a comic book leaves, if the elements that made that title a decent seller can't be maintained by any available talent, it might be wiser to let the title end instead of continuing it.

This would not and could not be done with more iconic characters, Superman, Spider-Man, *etc.* But less "public" characters might be better served by "retiring" and being revived when someone has an idea for a genuinely good story that's still true to the character. And such revivals might better lend themselves to collections, which publishers and sellers alike would probably welcome.

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CBG FOR ART'S SAKE by Chris Smigliano

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NEWS
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WHO ARE YOU AND WHO ARE YOU WITH?

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UM, YES. HELLO?
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BRIZ'03
YOU SEE, I HAVE THIS OLD CHRYSLER CAR THAT REALLY NEEDS TUNING. IF YOU COULD PLEASE CALL ME BACK, HERE'S MY NUMBER...
I SWEAR ON MY LIFE I AM NOT MAKING THIS UP!

HOW'S THAT AGAIN?

Charlie Harris
Charlie's Comic Books
5460 E. Speedway Blvd., Suite B-106
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Every year before convention season, I tell myself that I'm going to write this letter and then I don't find the time. Well, I have five minutes while a file downloads, so now's the time.

What do you think about having a phonetic guide to the proper pronunciation of creators' names? I know people are always asking me if Neil's last name is pronounced **gay**man or **guy**man, and I don't even want to get started on Sienkiewicz.

Others that customers seem to question are Benes, Busiek, Totleben, Naifeh, and such Japanese names as Shirow, Koike, Ikegami and Toriyama. I think the Japanese names are already as close to phonetic as they can be but I still hear very different permutations. This would seem to be something that could be repeated before convention season, and I'll bet there are a lot of names (Leialoha) that I'll think of later or that other readers might like to recommend. What do you think?

And how do you say Krause: Does it rhyme with grouse or is it **krou**see?

Maggie: *A phonetic guide is an excellent idea, one catch being that we don't have the phonetic alphabet fonts for best indication, so we have to approximate — as with the rhyme you suggest. Cat Yronwode once commented that David Michelinie's name rhymed with "pickle **my** knee," and so it goes.*

*It's Neil **gay** mun and Bill sin **kev** itch. But there are folks like Tom Orzechowski, who's said that he's changed the pronunciation of his name, because few people can pronounce it correctly. (That's something of the case with "Krause"; I've actually heard our telephone operators answer a ring with "krouse Publications," because otherwise the call would begin with the caller uncertain that he'd reached the right number. It's actually pronounced **krou** — rhyming with "how" — zee.) Kurt **bew** sick. John **tot** ul ben. Hey, I didn't know how to pronounce Shel Silverstein's last name (**sil** ver steen) until reports of his death were broadcast, and I'd been a fan since the early 1960s.*

LIBRARY DELIGHTS

Brian Poulin
6 Shawsheen Rd.
Lawrence, MA 01843

This is an update on some of the books I have recently read from local libraries. (I am really maxing them out.)

I have finished reading all the *Bones*. I am a latecomer to this series. I am a Tolkien freak, so this series is a natural for me. Excellent.

I can't believe I am also a latecomer to Neil Gaiman's *Sandman*. I have two volumes left to read in this mind-blowing series. This stuff is really out there but it is a masterpiece. Again, I'm kicking myself for not discovering this series in the early '90s. My local library has all the TPBs. Excellent. It satisfies my fantasy urge, also.

CrossGen TPBs are very popular. I have read *Ruse, Meridian, Sojourn, etc.* What gets me is the vibrant colors on these books. Wow! I like the lettering style, also. Congrats to CrossGen.

Maus II by Art Spiegelman: I was blown away. The father recalls the horrors of the Holocaust in a matter-of-fact way. I had nightmares the night I finished reading it. I'm looking for *Maus I* to read. Now, I understand what the hoopla is about.

So far I have read *Life in the Big City* and *Confessions* from *Kurt Busiek's Astro City*. I think this is a good, not great, series. I will read further books, if they are available.

Once I start reading a TPB, I keep reading it until it is done. In most cases, I read a graphic novel in one day. This keeps my mind active.

Another treat is I moved, so I was missing 10 issues of ***CBG***. Your customer service sent me the 10 issues I needed (to come out of the tail end of my sub), so now I have a stack of ***CBG***s between the TPBs. Awesome.

Reading comics has been a lifelong project for me. I'm taking advantage of the library system. I still have *Legion of Super-Heroes Archives* to read as well as the other *Archives*. *LSH* will be first. Shooter and Swan in the '60s!

Thanks for a publication that keeps my enthusiasm high.

FF #115 DID IT

Chris Mueller
2301 S. Mopac, #914
Austin, TX 78746

In ***CBG*** #1561, you ask what comic book first led me to collect comics for the first time: *Fantastic Four* #115 (Oct 71) "In the Power of the Over-Mind!" Why? It was my first realization of how dramatic and absorbing a comic book could be. This particular issue was worn to a frazzle, as it was being absorbed by my young eager mind. Never again would I let a comic book be treated this way, as I had learned to cherish comic books from this point forward.

I was captivated, from the magnificent art by the late, great John Buscema and the equally great Joe Sinnott to the picture-perfect lettering from Artie Simek. (I would like to express my disappointment in his omission from the Top Five Letterers in Todd Klein's opinion in the recently revised *Comic Book Artist*. He was even left out in Honorable Mentions.)

What kept me wanting more was the wonderful build-up of a cliffhanger story. Please note that this issue was scripted by the ever-so-talented and well-loved Archie Goodwin. This man's presence can be felt in just about everything he did. It took me what seemed like forever to locate the conclusion to this story in the giant-sized *FF* #116. Finally, it was obtained by mail order, probably from Robert Bell or some other early comic-book dealer listed in the ads of comic books. Remember those guys? Ah, the joy of receiving a package in the mail of highly anticipated books.

Now, of course, there's eBay. And if I might digress for a moment, I would like to say to all those who complain about some of the service they receive on eBay: Get over it! What an absolutely fantastic way to shop for all the extremely difficult-to-find back issues. It is truly incredible what is available out there and it is a privilege and a joy to be able to shop for just about anything in this way.

Where was I? Oh, yeah ... By the time I obtained *FF* #116, it was anticlimactic. It did not matter, however, since by then I was already hooked. *FF* #115 to me was a perfect book, and I have been a Marvel fan ever since. I just loved the way Stan Lee would talk to me in his ever-energetic manner through his books.

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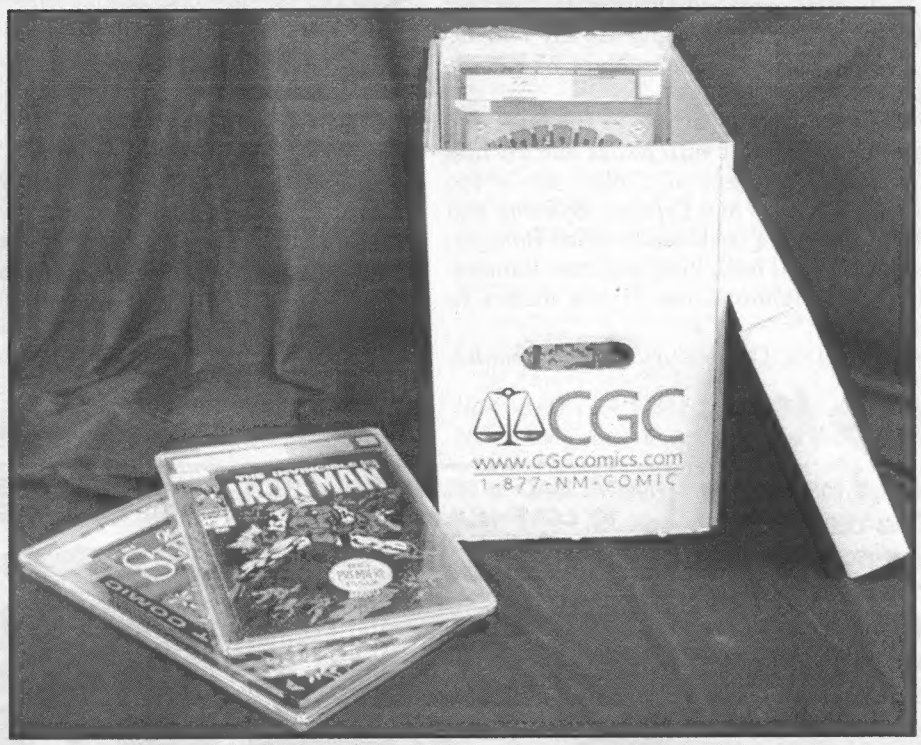

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CBG Reader Question of the Week #1563:

What's the most frightening comic book you ever read? Why did it scare you?

*Send your response to Oh, So?, **Comics Buyer's Guide**, 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990, or to **ohso@krause.com**.*

THE BALTIMORE CON

Steve Ogden
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Germantown, MD 20874

I would like to say thanks to Marc Nathan for organizing such a great show. I was there last year, and this year's show seemed just as successful, if not more so.

Even with Hurricane Isabel coming through the area, the show had a lot of attendees. The fans, pros, and indy press all seemed to have a great time. It was held at The Baltimore Convention Center and it never felt crowded: a lot of open space and room to move, well-organized.

There were long lines, but nothing *too* long. The only exception was the line for Jim Lee. The list of pros was impressive. People like Jim Lee, George Pérez (seemed as if he was signing all day), Geoff Johns, Scott Kollins, Mark Waid, Ron Marz, Matt Wagner, Brian Stelfreeze, Michael Kaluta, and a bunch of others.

I did not get to meet everyone I wanted to. The first folks I always look forward to seeing are my four favorite guys in comics: Jim Calafiore, Mark McKenna, John Gallagher, and Steve Conley.

Calafiore is one of the best artists in the business; Jim is doing some great stuff with *Exiles* and *Faction Paradox*. McKenna is one heck of a inker, one of the best. Mark is inking *Exiles* and *Crimson Dynamo* and has a wonderful children's book-comic called *Banana-Tail*. Whether or not you have kids, visit the Banana-Tail gang at *www.bananatail.com*. It just makes ya happy. Fun stuff!

Gallagher's Sky Dog Comics (*www.skydogcomics.com*) put out *More Fund Comics*, benefiting the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. It was available at the show for only $10 — a whopping 192 pages with work done by many great comics folks. You can get a copy through John's website. John put a lot of effort to get this book off the ground, and the book has the latest adventure of everyone's favorite super-hero, Buzzboy. The book has two different covers: one by George Pérez and one by Frank Cho. I bought the Pérez one. It has The Hulk smashing out "Censorship" — cool! The book is well worth the price.

Conley (*www.astoundingspacethrills.com*) puts out a wonderful comic book, *Astounding Space Thrills*. It has fun stories and great characters. Every convention he attends, Steve puts out special issue of *Astounding Space Thrills* just for that show. But you can get all of the issues from his website; do yourself a favor and get them. It is fun, good ol' science fiction. Everyone needs Argosy Smith in his life. At the show, Steve would give away the comic book for that show and include a sketch on the cover.

All of these guys are true professionals and nice guys. I bought nice art from Jim and Steve and crossed comics off my want list.

With all of the crazy stuff going on in this world, it is nice to able to attend something like this, have a wonderful time, meet the "movie stars" of our "world," and remember it for a very long time, if not forever.

Thank you again, Marc Nathan, for making it happen — and thank you, Jim, Mark, John, and Steve, for doing what you guys do best: giving us great comic books.

SAN DIEGO DELIGHTS

Dana Gabbard
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Los Angeles, CA 90010

I'd like to share these belated reflections on Comic-Con International 2003.

Boy, did I have a blast this year! I have to agree that walking the aisles through the exhibit hall was quite a hike. But a lot of space was taken up with media booths and the like, which, in my case, earned barely more than a glance. Despite the grumbling that it is no longer comic-book-oriented, the San Diego show still has a lot of comic-book dealers, and I availed myself of the opportunity to pick up recent comics I had missed.

Another priceless opportunity came when good friend Joe Torcivia and I spent 15 minutes or so in animated conversation with ***CBG*** columnist Chuck Rozanski about the current state of the industry. Where else would we have a chance to do that?

To me, the heart and soul of the show resides in the programming, which still emphasizes comics. The programs for which Mark Evanier served as host this year included true gems: a panel on *Seduction of the Innocent* (with video from the 1960s of Dr. Wertham debating Vincent Price on the old *Mike Douglas Show*), the amazing Quick Draw competition (Jim Lee got the biggest laugh with a naughty drawing on the theme "what I like least about the con"), an overflow of Cartoon Voice artists showing their stuff, an incredible panel on Gold Key Comics, plus the annual visit with the *Groo* Crew. I attended the annual gathering of Little Lulu fans (this year, I played Iggy in the dramatic reading *à la* Old Time Radio of a classic *Lulu* story by John Stanley) and screamed with laughter at Jerry Beck's evening program on Worst Cartoons.

I was even on a panel about the death of letters columns with fellow panelists Batton Lash, Malcolm Bourne, Bob Hall, and moderator Marv Wolfman. The discussion was animated with thoughtful input from the audience. It is gratifying to note that, since the con, Marvel has announced plans to bring back letters columns on a limited basis. Now, if only DC would see the light ...

Can you believe it is only nine months until July 2004? Start saving your money!

I have been greatly enjoying the latest installments of Steven E. Mitchell's series on the anti-comics movement of the 1940s and 1950s. Can one hope further installments carrying the story from 1953 through 1955 will be forthcoming?

CrossGen seems to be doing a lot of things right. But I worry the line of late has been expanding too quickly. Are the added titles bringing new readers? I'd imagine many who originally bought the entire line are finding themselves looking over the burgeoning number of Cross Gen titles and having to make hard choices as to which titles to collect to avoid breaking the bank. I'd be curious whether any retailers share this concern.

Maggie: *I asked Steven whether he wanted to try to put together the next installment as soon as the recent "Gathings Committee" episode wrapped up, and he asked for more time. Since (a) it'd been ages since we'd run earlier installments and (b) we were receiving requests to see them, we began rerunning the original series. In fact, this issue features the start of what had been his second installment originally.*

We, too, are looking forward to learning more about anti-comics pressures of the middle of the last century. For one thing, it might serve as necessary reference material for those dealing with anti-comics pressures today.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Mike Avila
561 10th Ave., 19D
New York, 10036

In answer to your question in ***CBG*** #1562 about

LAST KISS

BY JOHN LUSTIG

It started out innocently enough! One day *Flip Flounders* noticed that his father was *missing!* It had been days--or maybe even years!--since he'd seen his dad sprawled out on the couch watching endless *Baywatch re-runs!* What happened? What horrible sequence of events could have roused the household's mighty alpha male from his lair? Flip could *only* imagine!

MAYBE DAD'S BEEN ABDUCTED BY LOVE-HUNGRY ALIEN AMAZONS...
...WHO NEED MEN TO RE-POPULATE THEIR PLANET!
©John Lustig 2003
Art by Mario Hernandez
NAH! THAT WAS HIS EXCUSE THE LAST THREE TIMES...
...WHEN MOM CAUGHT HIM IN THAT MOTEL WITH ALL THOSE WOMEN!
GULP! IT CAN'T BE THAT AGAIN! OR... COULD IT?

NEXT: Discover the terrible fate of Flip's father...if you dare!

what I would do with a $64 million Lotto windfall, the answer is simple: quit my job and open a comic-book store!

No, seriously. That's exactly what I would do. Living in New York City, I have the luxury of a very large potential customer base to draw from (although I would have to compete with excellent stores like Jim Hanley's Universe and Midtown Comics, where I buy my books).

I would focus on new books, back issues, and collectibles. Nothing earth-shattering. But I would also have a reader's corner with some couches and soda machines and a bunch of long boxes filled with 25¢ comics for people to read and buy. That would be my way to encourage the reading of comics, instead of just bagging and boarding 'em. I figure my big cash winnings would provide me the time I need to get the business off the ground.

As for my collecting, I would go coast-to-coast searching for a few personal Holy Grails: the highest-quality *Amazing Fantasy* #15 available, any of the original John Romita Sr. covers to the Marvel Fireside books, and the Kirby cover and art to *Avengers* #158.

Aah, to dream. It would be nice ... By the way, in answer to the question in ***CBG*** #1560, about what gift to give this Christmas? I would suggest a subscription to the best comic book out right now, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, or one of the great DC *Archives* collections or Marvel *Masterworks*. Any would be a great gift for an old fan or for someone who's not familiar with our great obsession.

Hey, anyone know if those Romita covers or Kirby's *Avengers* #158 art is available anywhere? Or are they locked away, forever isolated from the hands of desperate collectors like me?

LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE

Michael Rawdon
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Mountain View, CA 94043

Thanks for Stephen C. George's *Retroview* on the 1970s *All-Star Comics* revival in ***CBG*** #1557. This is one of the comics I remember most fondly from my childhood (perhaps not a surprise, since my father was a big fan of the original *All-Star Comics* when *he* was a kid), and I still pull it out and read it from time to time.

That said, I did want to fill in what I think is an important omission:

While the revival did, indeed, run from only *All-Star Comics* #58-74 (plus *DC Special* #29), the series was a victim of the DC Implosion of 1978; it wasn't canceled due to a decline in the quality of the stories, as George seems to imply. Following #74, The Justice Society moved to one of the slots of the oversized *Adventure Comics*, appearing there from #461 to 466 with the same creative team.

This run presented the stories intended for *All-Star* #75 and beyond (or so I understand). The first three issues depicted the death of a member of The JSA and its ramifications on the rest of the team, and the story equals the quality of the best of the *All-Star* run. Also right up there is the final issue of the run, which explains why The JSA disappeared during the 1950s and which was a nice coda to the series. (The great scene between Power Girl and The Huntress at the beginning was a bonus; you can easily see how these two are the successors to Superman and Batman and yet are also their own people.)

(As a side note, continuity nuts will observe that the Earth-2 Batman who appears in *Justice League of America* #135-137 is portrayed very differently from the Batman in the All-Star revival only a few months later. On the other hand, *Adventure* #466 refers to the events of *JLA* #171-172 in a more sensical fashion.)

"It's the only comic book that has conveyed to me difficulties that different generations of super-heroes might have in working together."

What do I love about this series? Ultimately, it's one of DC's strongest character books from the 1970s. In particular, it's the only comic book ever that has successfully conveyed to me the difficulties that different generations of super-heroes might have in working together.

Not only that, but it showed the JSA members aging in different ways. Superman was "semi-retired" and not especially eager to take up the cape on a regular basis, but still felt a responsibility to the heroes he had inspired. Batman and several others were fully retired and had their own careers in their private lives. Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, and Wildcat were still full-time heroes, but their methods meshed to varying degrees with such younger heroes as Power Girl and The Huntress. (Flash's easy-going nature allowed him to work with practically anyone; Hawkman was something of an autocrat; and Wildcat was something of a chauvinist.) This gave the characters a verisimilitude rarely found elsewhere.

The current *JSA* series has been widely lauded for its characterizations and depiction of inter-generational heroing, but I've never found it especially convincing (and, indeed, I recently stopped buying the series). The older heroes don't act markedly different from the younger ones, and the stories skew heavily toward standard plot- and action-driven adventure; character-based conflict is rare.

(As an example, in their meeting with The JLA a year or so ago, there was a scene in which Mr. Terrific was discussing his personal life and motivations with Batman, and the story *cut away* from the scene just as Terrific explained what he wants to talk about, thus depriving the reader of a really good character bit. I practically threw the issue across the room at that point, let me tell you.)

Alas, it may never be quite possible to write a series with the sort of generational impact that the 1970s *All-Star Comics* had. In these days of constant retcons and rebootings, it's rare for front-line heroes to fall into disuse long enough to grow old and relate to their successors. (The JSA themselves no longer qualify, because they're so old that they need to be imbued with fountain-of-youth technology to even be plausible as crime-fighters in the 21st century. In the 1970s they could plausibly be fairly active 50-somethings.) While plenty of writers create teams out of whole cloth to mentor their up-and-coming heroes, it's not quite the same as having *Superman* and *Batman* right there with the younger generation.

All-Star Comics in the 1970s caught lightning in a bottle. It's worth a look on this basis alone (and the often-excellent art doesn't hurt, either).

SEE *AMERICAN SPLENDOR*

Jack Gilreath
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Bellevue, NE 68005

I'm in a small but sincere comic-book club. Mostly, we talk comics, browse Krypton Comics' well-stocked bins in Omaha, and eat Chinese food. Lately, with all the comics-related movies coming out, we've added moviegoing to our agenda.

I'm no huge fan of comic-book movies. I enjoy them, but, for instance, *Superman* did not thrill me. Keaton's Batman was OK. *X-Men* and *Spider-Man* the same. If I were not a comics fan, these would leave me flat, like most other action films.

This is *not* the case with *American Splendor*. I loved it. You do not need to be familiar with the comics, or even *like* comics, to thoroughly enjoy this unusual film. I urge everyone to find one of the few theaters now showing *American Splendor* and bring non-comics people to see it. Yeah, it's kinda "arty" now and then, but it's also honest and down-to-earth. And funny. I'll leave it to professionals to try to describe it, since I'm confident that you'll be hearing a lot more about this flick.

Go see it before it's gone. If you want more from a movie than explosions, it's for you.

Nathan: *I am in complete agreement, as you can tell by my review in* ***CBG*** *#1560. A great thing about* ***American Splendor*** *is how accessible it is to* ***all*** *audiences. Case in point: I went to see the film with my parents and my sister. This is nothing new; I made them sit through* ***X-Men***, ***Daredevil***, *and* ***Hulk***, *but this was something different. My parents have been acquainted with independent comics, since I constantly shove my favorites at them. They have always been open-minded, and they were the ones who suggested we see* ***American Splendor***. *Needless to say, when the six of us left the theater (****CBG*** *Designer Shawn Williams and his wife, Heather, were with us), we felt we had seen something important, not just a shoot 'em up action film.*

If ***American Splendor*** *is not in serious consideration for Oscars come 2004, there is something wrong. But, Oscar consideration aside, there is another aspect of* ***American Splendor*** *that sets it apart from the rest of the comics films of 2003: It is a good date movie. So grab your favorite girl or guy and check out a wonderfully crafted film that will inspire much dinner conversation afterward.* ✦

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What really happens at a charity ball

Or, The Dress strikes again!

hey kids! COMICS!

By **Heidi MacDonald**

It was an exciting night in Gotham. MOCCA was throwing a big, fancy bash — an opening for its Living Masters art show as well as a fundraiser — at the Forbes Galleries, and I had been invited to cover it.

MOCCA, of course, is the planned Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art here in New York City. For the last few years, Chairman Lawrence Klein and the rest of the MOCCA crew have been putting on art shows, organizing the MOCCA Arts Festival, and, in general, becoming a vital part of the New York comics scene.

Tonight's exhibit was something special, however. The Forbes Galleries, on Fifth Avenue, is a privately owned museum put together by the Forbes family. The museum houses a breathtaking collection of Fabergé eggs, as well as sizeable collections of fine art and miniature armies. MOCCA had arranged to have an exhibit of original comics art at the show, as well as a silent-auction fundraiser. There were to be speeches and proclamations and a celebrity or two.

I was delighted to be able to cover the event. The invitation said black tie optional, which meant a chance to dress up, which I never miss. But what to wear?

Regular readers of this column know what's coming next, and, yes, it's The Dress. The Dress that ruined the Eisners for me. The Dress that I am convinced caused the 2003 Blackout. The Dress I dared not wear again for fear of causing another catastrophe. I had vowed to bury the thing in the ocean or take it to the consignment shop ... but I hadn't. It was still hanging, innocently, in my closet. What harm would it do to wear it just this once, I thought? I didn't think there was a chance I could bring disaster to this event.

So, yes, I wore it. Grabbing my handbag and my trusty camera to snap pictures, I raced to the Forbes Galleries. I arrived just as the speeches were being made, including one by Joan Rivers, the celebrity emcee for the silent auction. As I walked in, I could see what a splendid night this was. The permanent exhibits themselves are impressive, but a whole room was devoted to the Living Masters exhibit, with pieces by Bill Watterson, Gilbert Hernandez, Jack Davis, Will Eisner, and many more.

It was also fun to see familiar faces all dressed up, as I took pictures. I saw Joe and Hillarie Staton (left), looking elegant in formal attire. Joe, as perhaps only Maggie and I will recall, did the header for the very first incarnation of this column, many years ago. Later, I worked with him when I edited *Scooby-Doo*, and Joe is truly one of my most favorite people to work with. I also hobnobbed with the Mignolas, Mike and Christie. "This is the first time I've worn a tie in seven years," Mike quipped. Bill Sienkiewicz and my old neighbor, former Topps and Marvel Editor Jim Salicrup, were also in attendance. A dapper Denis Kitchen extolled the artistic talents of his youngest daughter. Martha Thomases, my friend of many years from her time doing publicity for DC, was handling some publicity for the event and introduced me to Christopher Forbes, Vice Chairman of Forbes Inc. and a big comics collector, himself.

Then she offered to show me the most valuable piece in the collection. She took me over to one side of the room. I couldn't believe I'd missed it before. There it was: the original art to the cover of *The Dingbats of Danger Street* by Kirby himself.

"Good lord! How priceless! I can't believe it's here!" I exclaimed.

"It is remarkable," said Martha. Just then, she was called off to have a word with the official photographer for the event, a guy named Peter.

I bent closer to the art to get a better look and then decided to take a photo. As I was backing up, I felt myself bump into someone.

"So sorry!" I said turning around, afraid that I might have caused a spilled drink. My victim seemed to be unharmed, however — a very tall, very good-looking man of 35 or so whose powerfully built frame was visible beneath the tuxedo he seemed so at home in.

"I was trying to get a picture ..." I stammered, now feeling very embarrassed. Dashing didn't even begin to describe him.

"It's quite all right," he said. He seemed to be humoring me, and now I was even more mortified. Seeing my discomfort, he held out his hand. "Lamont Templar."

"Um, Heidi MacDonald."

"Ah. I think I've seen your photographs of Hugo Pratt. You've got an extraordinary eye."

"Well, thanks."

"That's a stunning dress, as well."

"Really? I was afraid to wear it tonight. You see, I thought ..."

But handsome Mr. Templar was never to know what I thought, for at that moment there was a frightful crash and the entire room began to fill with black smoke.

"What the ..." I heard Jim Salicrup exclaim. Joan Rivers screamed, as several dark, SWAT-team like figures began to jump into the room through a now-broken window. They were armed.

"If you'll excuse me," Mr. Templar said. "By the way, I think you might want to get under a table or something." Pushing me roughly towards the canapés, he ran away. What a jerk, I thought, but I dove under the table. The Statons were already there. Years of training from drawing *Scooby-Doo*, I suppose.

I could still see what was happening in the room. The party guests were being herded into the corners. It was a scene of panic and pandemonium such as I could never have imagined. What on earth was happening? And then, suddenly, there was a loud clanking sound, and I understood.

A tall, almost super-human figure in some kind of metal suit was entering the gallery. His face wasn't visible, as he wore some kind of metal mask in a strange animalistic shape, with glowing red eyes. The absurd thought that it looked like some kind of rodent, a vole perhaps, crossed my mind.

So this was what my foolish insistence on wearing The Dress had brought upon us all — how stupid I had been. How obvious the danger now was. A supervillain had decided to attack the charity ball! And it was all my fault. I had spoiled MOCCA's big night!

The metal man went over to the cover of *The Dingbats of Danger Street* and picked it up in his metal fist. "Finally," he shouted. His voice was altered by some kind of vocoder in his mask. "Finally, I, the Vole, the greatest criminal mastermind of the age, have achieved my greatest dream! *The Dingbats of Danger Street* are within my grasp!"

"Not so fast, Vole!" came another voice, this one deep and booming. I scooted over to the other side of the table to see what was happening. A man in some kind of skin-tight green exercise suit was standing on the stairs. He was wearing a hood and a cape and seemed to have some kind of rope in his hand. "You've just crashed your last party."

"Green Hood! I should have known," The Vole sneered, I believe is the word. "By the time we're finished with you, you're going to be The Black and Blue Hood!"

With that, The Green Hood shot some kind of cable from his hand and the battle was on. I'm not going to bore you with all the tedious details. Suffice to say, there was a corker of a scrap. The Vole had numbers on his side, but The Green Hood seemed to have something else ... a sense of justice, perhaps?

The battle ended with The Vole and all his men battered and bound, as the police came to take them away. Lawrence, Christopher Forbes, and everyone was a bit shaken, but, aside from the broken window, the gallery hadn't been damaged, no one had been injured — and, most important of all, the cover to *The Dingbats of Danger Street* was unharmed.

As I was getting ready to leave, I saw Templar coming out of the men's room, of all places. What a cowardly weasel!

"Miss MacDonald," he started to say.

"Blow it out your belfry, bub," I snorted.

"I can't believe this happened," I heard Lawrence murmuring, as I walked outside.

I could. Hadn't he ever read a comic book? ✦

OK, so everything up until the ***Dingbats*** *cover was true. It was a great party! Thanks, Lawrence!*

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Heidi can be e-mailed at ***comixace@aol.com****.*

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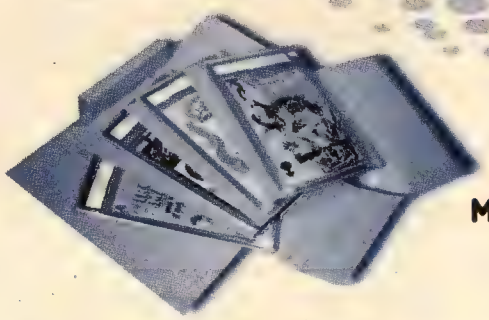

Fold in end cubes protect graded comic case corners from arriving cracked or broken. Mailers and pads are made from 200# test brown corrugated cardboard.

Single Graded Comic Mailers

5	$ 8.80	8 1/4 x 13 x 3/4 comes with pads
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100	24.20	
200	39.60	

Super / Anniversary
8 13/16 x 13 5/16

25	$ 9.00	Prod. Code SGCL3
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100	24.70	
200	40.45	

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*"At **CBG**, we think more great comics are being published today than ever before. It's our mission to keep you informed about the people and publishers making news today."*

A horrific story for Halloween

NBM releases another *Treasury of Victorian Murder!*
Rants & Raves, Page 26

IN BRIEF

Image rolls out *Shangri-La*

Rock and roll combines with comic-book storytelling, when Image Comics releases *Shangri-La*, a graphic novel written by Marc Bryant and drawn by Shepherd Hendrix. The 72-page one-shot tells the story of a burned-out, gun-for-hire, ex-rock star who forms an alliance with the man who is sent to kill him.

Bryant said, "*Shangri-La* is what happened when I got too jaded about the music industry and started wondering if any of the rock icons ever faked their own death. Things got out of hand soon after, and I had a full-blown chase thriller on my hands, one with quite a few laughs as well. The bottom line is, it brings together two of my favorite things in life: comic books and rock and roll. There's a Dolly Parton cross-dresser, too."

Priced at $7.95, *Shangri-La* will feature a cover by Kieron Dwyer and Mal Jones and is due in stores Jan. 14.

BULLETINS AT ONCE!

Get breaking news on CURRENT COMICS right away. Visit http://bulkmail.krause.com to subscribe to our e-mail bulletin. Upon arrival at the site, choose "comics" as an interest, enter your e-mail address, and select that you wish to receive newsletters. You'll receive a weekly preview of upcoming sections — as well as instant news on breaking stories in today's comics hobby!

Shivers galore

Scary stuff doesn't daunt editors of eeriness

By **Nathan Melby**

Monsters, mayhem, and mystery might creep out the timid, but some editors face the challenge with cool cheeriness. The latest resurgence in comic-book horror may have had its roots in the success of DC's decade-long Vertigo line, but the growth of dark fantasy has reached tentacles into the output of a number of companies.

Some comic-book editors can now consider themselves specialists in haunting, bump-in-the-night fantasy fiction. From IDW Publishing's massive hit *30 Days of Night* to an entire horror line at Dark Horse, there are many creepy comics for horror fans to enjoy while they shudder. Some editors chatted with ***CBG*** about what got them into horror, what it has been like editing horror comics, and what chills are ahead.

Speaking from dark worlds: Dark Horse Comics Editor Scott Allie told ***CBG*** that he has always been a fan of horror comics — and that is what led to him editing the horror comics line at Dark Horse.

"Horror has always been the stuff that I read and the stuff that got me into comics in the first place," Allie told ***CBG***. "I read the old San Francisco undergrounds like *Skull* and *Slow Death* and, even before that, Bruce Jones' *Twisted Tales*. Back then, even comics like that were sold on the newsstand, and I remember picking that up and I loved that stuff."

***Hellboy** is going to get the royal treatment fom Hollywood in 2004.*

> ***"The sexiness of Vampirella is just natural, so we have to build the horror story around her."***
>
> *— Maureen McTigue*

Harris Comics Editor Maureen McTigue has been editing *Vampirella Comics* for two years but said she's been a fan of horror for a lot longer than that. "I have always liked the horror genre in general. Growing up, I was a fan of horror novels," McTigue told ***CBG***. "The sexiness of Vampirella is just natural, so we have to build the horror story around her. We have done werewolves and zombies and other vampires — and that is the key in a character like this: figuring out what *makes* it horror or what will make a better horror story than just a pretty girl in a situation."

Jeff Marriotte was nominated for a Bram Stoker Award for horror in the illustrated narrative category in 2001 for *Desperadoes: Quiet of the Grave* and now finds himself editing one of the hottest creative teams in horror comics: Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith. "It struck me from time to time in the past that comics do not always do a good job of horror," Marriotte told ***CBG***. "They do a lot of the twist-ending E.C. stories, but for a long time there was nothing in comics horror that was really *scary*. Some of the stuff that we are doing is genuinely frightening to read in a way that had been lost for a long time."

Dark Horse's horror line: Allie said Dark Horse has received positive response from retailers and readers since it launched its horror line in February.

"It seems that the time was right, because it seems as if other publishers are getting into the horror game," Allie said. "WildStorm is doing some horror comics; I know that Bob Schreck is going to be editing a horror anthology at DC; and there's a lot more.

"The thing that has always bummed me out about horror comics is that usually, whenever they are doing horror comics, they just do one kind of book. With Chaos, everything was blood and breasts — and in Vertigo everything is smart and sophisticated, as if they're a lot of guys hanging out at coffee shops talking about monsters."

Allie said that what Dark Horse is trying right now is diverse.

"We are really trying to run the gamut of what horror means and how to apply it to comics. We are doing classy, sophisticated, smart stuff — *and* low-brow, funny monster stuff. In the coming year, we are going to do stuff that is more shocking and some really harsh horror comics.

"We have a project called *The Nail* with Rob Zombie and Steve Niles that is really going to be a heavy-metal horror book. It will be drawn by Nat Jones, who is a former *Spawn* artist, and the story features the undead, zombies, bikers, and pro wrestlers, so it is different from our other titles like *Devil's Footprints* or *Hellboy* in that it is a much more over the top and fun kind of horror."

Allie indicated the company's first wave of titles in the horror line were not as far apart in tone and subject matter as they will be, going forward. "The reason I think the horror line is going to last is that it is not as narrowly defined as other imprints or other lines. It has

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plenty of room to grow — *and* to shrink, if it has to. We have always done horror books here and there; the horror *line* to me is just an excuse to put my focus there.

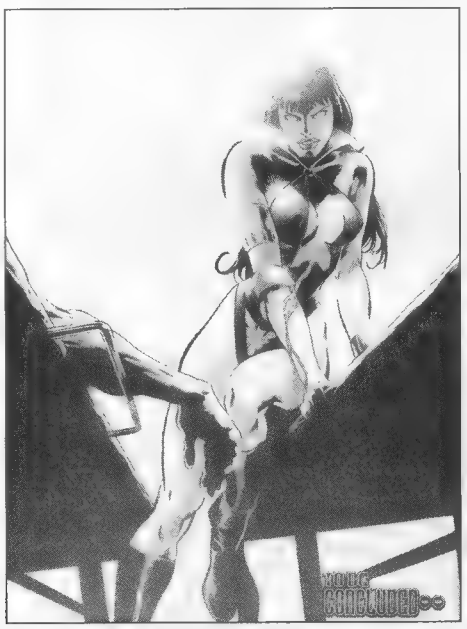
"We have a lot of projects going with creators like Steve Niles and Mike Mignola and a lot of things we are going to roll out next year that I think will add a lot of juice to the horror line."

While Allie said he does not see the current *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* title as a true horror title, he wants to move the property more toward its horror roots, beginning with a project titled *Tales of the Vampires*, due in stores in December. "When I initially agreed to edit *Buffy*, I was thinking that this would finally be my chance to edit a horror book — but, as I got deeper into the show, I realized that it is not really a horror property. This is really much more of a fun action adventure that happens to feature monsters, with the occasional scary story.

"*Tales of the Vampires* is going to be the first *Buffy* project that really *is* a horror project.

"We kind of did it with *Spike and Dru*, but this is more straight-ahead horror fiction, rather than hero fiction, and we are tying it in to the horror line by having Ben Templesmith, Eric Powell, and Brian Horton doing covers for different issues."

Allie said that he and *Buffy* creator Joss Whedon are working on whether to take the core *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* title more into its horror roots. "It is my hope that what we are going to do will be more dark and will drop *Buffy* more snugly into the horror lineup," Allie said. "Joss and I have talked about that, but we haven't really worked it out yet. I asked him to give me some kind of outline or directive for what has happens to her after the end of the series, and he said he wants to do that, but he hasn't had a chance to because he has been busy with *Angel* and *Firefly*. The only time I get out of him right now is finishing the *Fray* trade paperback and the stuff he is writing for *Tales of the Vampires*. Having done a Year One and filling in a lot of gaps between seasons, I think the thing to do is to take advantage of the fact that the show is gone and that the characters have to find a new way."



Vampirella recently switched to magazine format.

Vampi switches to magazine format: At Harris Comics, *Vampirella* recently switched to a magazine format, and that means that fans will get to see more horror stories, whether truly frightening, or just campy, McTigue told ***CBG***.

"There will still be Vampirella stories, but we are playing with that. In the first issue, there is one horror story and another that is more light-hearted. I like playing with the horror, but you can't deny the roots of camp that come with Vampirella," McTigue said.

The new 48-page color and black-and-white bimonthly magazine is now shipping to stores. The $3.95 publication will feature all-new Vampirella stories by such creators as Jimmy Palmiotti, Justin Gray, and Steve Liever.

IDW ongoing series: After the success of *Dark Days* and *30 Days of Night*, IDW Publishing will release IDW's first *ongoing* series from the creative team of Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith. The series, *Sacred Hearts*, will begin release next year.

"We've been looking for the right property — and the right team — to launch our first ongoing series," IDW Editor in Chief Jeff Marriotte said. "In Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith, we have that team. Steve's high-concept storytelling is second to none, and Ben brings Steve's ideas to life brilliantly. And in *Sacred Hearts* we have that property: a sure winner."

***"Sacred Hearts** is about self-discovery and the idea that no matter what life hands us, we are not doomed to any one path"*

— Steve Niles

Writer Steve Niles described the project, "*Sacred Hearts* is a combination of ideas I've been playing with for a while. It's sort of a horror soap opera with characters like vampires, werewolves, devils, and one poor priest who walks the line between the holy and unholy.

"*Sacred Hearts* is about self-discovery and the idea that, no matter *what* life hands us, we are not doomed to any one path. The main character is a man who has just lost his adopted parents and is told a terrible secret before they pass. Everything he ever thought he was has been a lie, and now, in searching for the truth, he will enter a world — a gauntlet — of religious zealots, Satanic cults, and creatures of the night."

Artist Ben Templesmith said, "Don't expect the art to be the same as *30 Days of Night* — my first printed work — but expect it to have the same vibrancy and atmosphere. I'm going to experiment like hell on this one." ✦

IN BRIEF

CrossGen launches version 3 of web comics

CrossGen Comics has launched the third version of its Comics on the Web program a year and a half after the initial release of the online comics project.

Comics on the Web 3.0 will feature a new front end, while providing front ends translated into such other languages as Spanish, German, Italian, French, and Japanese. A shift from one-bit to two-bit support has allowed the company to incorporate character sets from Asian languages.

Other additions to the program include alternate audio track support including voice-overs and creator commentary, automatic balloon movement synced with the audio track, and the new Code 6 titles *Brian Pulido's Lady Death* and *R.A. Salvatore's Demon Wars*. The release date from on sale to online has been shortened from six months to three months.

CrossGen Director of Information Technology Courtland Whited said, "With sites ranging the world, a partnership with AOL, and a whole new site fueled by nearly 350 issues, we're honored to bring comics to new audiences. The key to making it all work is quality comics — and, no matter the medium, that will always be at the center of CrossGen."

CrossGen's *Comics on the Web* can be located at *www.comicsontheweb.com*.

NEW COMICS shipping Oct. 26-Nov. 1

The following information is taken from publisher and distributor solicitations and updates and is as accurate as possible at press time. Check with your local retailer to find out what day new comics go on the shelves. Comics that are delayed or rescheduled will be tracked in future *CBG Calendars*.

Note: ✪ indicates a rescheduled comic book that appeared in a previous *CBG Calendar*.

Archie Comic Publications

Archie's Double-Digest #147, $3.59
Betty & Veronica #194, $2.19
Betty & Veronica Spectacular #63, $2.19
Sonic The Hedgehog #129, $2.19

CrossGen

Crux #30, $2.95
John Carpenter's Snake Plissken #3, (two covers $2.99)
✪ *Ruse* #24, $2.95 (Oct. 5-11)
✪ *Sigil* #41, $2.95 (Oct. 12-18)
✪ *Way of the Rat* #18, $2.95 (Oct. 5-11)

Dark Horse

Galactic #3, $2.99
Mac Raboy's Flash Gordon Vol. 4 TP, $19.95
Star Wars: Jedi-Dooku Clone Wars Special, $4.99
Ultraman Tiga #3, $3.99
Will Eisner Sketchbook HC, $49.95

DC Comics

Batman/Joker Switch, $6.95
Batman/Superman World's Finest TP, $19.95
Caper #1, $2.95
Cartoon Cartoons #23, $2.25
Catwoman #24, $2.50
Crisis On Multiple Earths Vol. 2 TP, $14.95
Empire #4, $2.50
Flash #203, $2.25
Green Lantern #170, $2.25
JLA #89, $2.25
Legion #25, $3.95

Gemstone Publishing

Uncle Scrooge #323, $6.95
Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #638, $6.95

Humanoids Publishing

December 32nd HC, $15.95

Image Comics

Age of Bronze #18, $3.50
Leave It To Chance Vol. 3: Monster Madness HC, $14.95
Realm of the Claw #1, (two covers $2.95, Sp Ed. $10.95)
Something Wicked #1, $2.95
Spawn #139, $2.50
Stupid Comics #2, $2.95
Vampire's Christmas GN, $5.95

Marvel Comics

Crimson Dynamo #3, $2.50
Earth X Vol. 5: Paradise X Book 2 TP, $29.99
Essential Tomb of Dracula Vol. 1 TP, $14.99
Hulk Gray #2, $3.50
Hulk: Nightmerica #5, $2.99
Marvel Mangaverse Vol. 4: X-Men - Ronin TP, $13.99
Mystique #8; $2.99
Namor #8, $2.99
Silver Surfer #4, $2.25
Thor: Vikings #4, $3.50
✪ *Ultimate Spider-Man Vol. 7: Irresponsible TP*, $12.99 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)
✪ *Ultimates* #12, $2.25 (Sep. 21-27)
Venom #7, $2.25
✪ *Wolverine: Snikt!* #5 (of 5), $2.99 (Aug 31-Sept 6)
X-Statix #15, $2.99
X-Treme X-Men #33, $2.99

NOW APPEARING!

October 18

Mark Wheatley (*Frankenstein Mobster*) and **Marc Hempel** (*Gregory, Naked Brain*) at True Believers Comics & Gallery, 435 S. Guadalupe, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

October 20

Danny Donovan (comics writer) at Pinckney Public Library, 350 Mower Rd., Pinckney, **Michigan** 48169, from 4 to 6 p.m.

October 22

Brent Anderson (*Astro City, Rising Stars*) at Windsor Regional Library, 9291 Old Redwood Highway Bldg. 100, Windsor, **California**, from 4 to 5 p.m.

November 2

Jamar Nicholas (*Detective Boogaloo: Hip-Hop Cop*) at Aetna Fire Hall, Main St., Newark, **Delaware** 19711, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

November 15

Alex Ross (*JLA: Truth and Justice* artist), **Paul Dini** (*JLA: Truth and Justice* writer), and **Chip Kidd** (*Mythology: The DC Art of Alex Ross* designer/writer) at Lee's Comics, 1020 N. Rengstorff Ave., Suite F, Mountain View, **California** 94043, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Gallery Showings Sept. 29-Oct. 24

Original art of Brent Anderson (*Astro City, Rising Stars*) and **Thomas Yeates** (*Zorro, Universe X*) at Windsor Regional Library, 9291 Old Redwood Highway Bldg. 100, Windsor, **California**. Exhibit hours: 1 to 5 p.m. daily.

Oct. 18-Dec. 31

The Art of Insight Studios at True Believers Comics & Gallery, 435 S. Guadalupe, Santa Fe, **New Mexico** 87501. Exhibit hours: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday.

Lecture series Nov. 4-Dec. 2

Arlen Schumer (author of *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art*) lecturing on super-heroes of the 1960s at The Graduate Center, CUNY, 365 Fifth Ave., New York, **New York** 10016, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. each Tuesday evening. Course cost: $120. Call (212) 817-8215 to register.

CONFIRMED SHIPPING

They're out there: We have received confirmation that the following titles have shipped and should be available in stores. This reflects shipping information received through October 10:

Aardvark Vanaheim: *Cerebus* #294, $2.25 (Sep)

AC Comics: *Best of the West* #38, $6.95 (Aug)

Alternative Comics: *A Sort of Homecoming* #1, $3.50 (Oct)
True Porn Anthology TP, $14.95 (Oct)

Amaze Ink (Slave Labor Graphics): *Hsu and Chan* #4, $2.95 (Oct)
The City Vol. 1 TP, $10.95 (Oct)

Antarctic Press: *Chillers*, $3.95 (Oct)
Courageous Princess Masterpiece Ed HC, $24.95 (Sp Ed $29.95) (Jun)
Dragon Arms Pkt Manga Vol. 1 TP, $9.99 (Sep)
Gold Digger #45, $2.99 (Aug)
Gold Digger Perfect Memory Vol. 3, $5.95 (Sep)
How To Draw Manga #26, $4.95 (Oct)
Luftwaffe: 1946 Technical Manual Collected Ed, $21.95 (Aug)
Men's Altered Wars Chronicles Annual #3, $4.95 (Sep)
Shoujo #3, $5.95 (Oct)
Twilight: X Storm #5, $3.50 (Sep)

Antimatter / Hoffman International: *Mike Hoffman's Tigress Vol. 1 Journey To Caldathera*, $9.95 (Jul)
New Realms of Sorcery: Art of Mike Hoffman Sketchbook, $16.95 (Jul)

Antipodes Publishing: *Knuckles The Malevolent Nun Vol. 1: No More Mrs. Nice Nun TP*, $19.95 (Aug)

Archie Comic Publications: *Archie* #541, $2.19 (Oct. 5-11)
Jughead #154, $2.19 (Oct. 5-11)
Veronica #145, $2.19 (Oct. 5-11)

Atta Boy: *Gobler Toys Vol. 1: Fun We Cant Remember TP*, $12.95 (Sep)

Avatar Press: *Frank Millers Robocop* #2 (of 9), (two covers $3.50) (Aug)
Shi Sempo #2 (of 2), (three covers $3.50, Sp Ed $3.95, Foil $12.95)) (Aug)
Warren Ellis Strange Killings: Strong Medicine #3 (of 3), $3.50 (Sp Ed $3.95) (Aug)

Aweful Books: *Gypsy Lounge: Lunchtime Variety Criminals GN*, $13.95 (Oct)

Basement Comics/Amryl Entertainment: *Heavy Metal Live Vol. 1 Photo of Julie Strain SC*, (two covers $8.95) (Jul)
Heavy Metal Live Vol. 1: Photo of Julie Strain Tour Ed SC, (two covers $8.95) (Aug)

Bongo Comics: *Futurama Comics* #15, $2.99 (Sep)

Bzzz Bee Cafe Publishing: *Santa Says Vol. 1 Smell of Burning Dreams GN*, $12.00 (Oct)

Claypool Comics: *Deadbeats* #61, $2.50 (Aug)
Elvira #125, $2.50 (Sep)

Colonia Press: *Ultra Klutz Book 2 TP*, $24.95 (Sep)

Comicsone.com: *Black Leopard GN* #1, $14.95 (Sep)
Bride of Deimos GN #5, $9.95 (Sep)
My Sassy Girl GN #1, $13.95 (Sep)
Storm Riders GN #12, $13.95 (Sep)

CPM Manga: *Popcorn Romance GN*, $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)

CrossGen: *Crossovers* #8, $2.95 (Aug. 17-23)
Crux #29, $2.95 (Aug. 17-23)
El Cazador #2, $2.95 (Oct)
R.A. Salvatore Demon Wars Vol. 2 #5, $2.95 (Sep)

Cyberosia Publishing: *Damned TP*, $19.95 (Aug)

Dark Horse: *Astro Boy Vol. 19 TP*, $9.95 (Sep. 21-27)
Chronicles of Conan Vol. 1 TP, $15.95 (Sep 14-20)
Drawing On Your Nightmares Halloween 2003 Special One-Shot, $2.99 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)
Kiss Vol. 3: Men and Monsters TP, $12.95 (Sep. 21-27)
Mac Raboy's Flash Gordon Vol. 2 TP, $19.95 (Jun 22-28)
Oh My Goddess! #102, $2.99 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)
Seraphic Feather Vol. 3: Dark Angel TP, $17.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Star Wars Tales #17, (two covers $5.99) (Sep. 21-27)
Super Manga Blast! #35, $5.99 (Aug 24-30)
Trigun Vol. 1 TP, $14.95 (Nov. 2-8)
Usagi Yojimbo #69, $2.99 (Sep. 21-27)

DC Comics: *100 Bullets* #47, $2.50 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)
Adventures of Superman #621, $2.25 (Oct. 5-11)
All-Star Archives Vol. 9 HC, $49.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Batman: Absolution SC, $17.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Batman: Death and the Maidens #3, $2.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #172, $2.50 (Oct. 5-11)
Demon: Driven Out #2, $2.50 (Oct. 5-11)
Doctor Fate #3, $2.50 (Oct. 5-11)
Fables #18, $2.50 (Oct. 5-11)
Fallen Angel #4, $2.50 (Oct. 5-11)
Gen 13 #14, $2.95 (Oct. 5-11)
H-E-R-O #9, $2.50 (Oct. 5-11)
Human Defense Corps #6, $2.50 (Oct. 5-11)
JLA #88, $2.25 (Oct. 5-11)
JSA All-Stars #6, $2.50 (Oct. 5-11)
Mad Magazine #435, $3.50 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)
Scooby-Doo #77, $2.25 (Oct. 5-11)
Stormwatch: Team Achilles #16, $2.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Superman & Batman: Generations III #10, $2.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Superman: The Man of Steel Vol. 2 TP, $19.95 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)
Tokyo Storm Warning #3 (of 3), $2.95 (Aug 10-16)
Tom Strong #22, $2.95 (Aug 10-16)
Two-Step #1, $2.95 (Oct. 19-25)
World's Best Comics: The Golden Age DC Archives Sampler, $0.99 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)
Y: The Last Man #15, $2.95 (Sep 14-20)

Death Ray Graphics: *The Great Taste of Deep Fried TP*, $14.99 (Aug)

Digital Webbing: *Freakshow*, $2.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Gutwallow: Fury of the Furry TP, $12.95 (Sep 14-20)

Dork Storm Press: *Nodwick* #22, $2.99 (Jul 20-26)

Drawn & Quarterly: *Drawn & Quarterly Showcase*, $18.95 (Jun)

Dreamwave: *Transformers: Armada* #16, $2.95 (Oct)
Transformers: Generation One Vol. 2 #6 (of 6), $2.95 (Sep)

Eureka Productions: *Graphic Classics Vol. 7: Bram Stoker*, $9.95 (Sep)

Eurocomics: *Bordello Nights Vol. 1 GN*, $9.50 (Nov. 2-8)

Fanboy Entertainment: *Angel's Wing* #3, $2.50 (Aug)
Angels Wing #4, $2.99 (Sep)

Fantagraphics Books: *Alice In Sexland Extreme* #4, $3.50 (May)
Barbarienne #7, $3.50 (Aug)
Bazongas! Vol. 2 GN, $10.95 (Oct)
Casual Sex #2, $3.50 (Jul)
Dame Darcys Meat Cake HC, $22.95 (Jun)
Housewives At Play: Wedding Album GN, $9.95 (Sep)

Felix Comics: *Felix The Cat: House of 1000 Ha Ha's*, $2.50 (Sep)

Fiery Studios: *Vogelein: Clockwork Faerie TP*, $12.95 (Oct. 12-18)

Geek Punk: *Super-Hero Happy Hour* #4, $3.00 (Sep)

Ghostwerks Comics: *Ghostwerks Comics* #1, $2.95 (Sep)

Gutsoon! Entertainment: *Raijin Comics* #38, $5.95 (Oct. 5-11)

I-Books: *Honour Among Punks S/N Px HC*, $29.95 (Jul)
Vic & Blood S/N Px HC, $29.95 (Jul)

Icarus Publishing: *A-G Super Erotic Anthology* #8, $4.99 (Jun)

IDW Publishing: *Dark Days* #4: 30 Days of Night Sequel, $3.99 (Oct)

Image Comics: *Agents* #6 (of 6), $2.95 (Aug 31-Sept 6)
Aria: The Uses of Enchantment #4 (of 4), $2.95 (Jul 20-26)
Capes #1 (of 3), $2.95 (Aug 31-Sept 6)
Feather #2, $2.95 (Oct. 5-11)
G.I. Joe #22, $2.95 (Sep 7-13)
G.I. Joe: Frontline #15, $2.95 (Sep 14-20)
Hellhounds #3, $2.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Micronauts #11, $2.95 (Sep 7-13)
Noble Causes: Distant Relatives #2 (of 4), $2.95 (Aug 24-30)
Paradigm #11, $3.50 (Jul 13-19)
PVP 4, $2.95 (Aug 31-Sept 6)
Rotogin: Junkbotz #3 (of 8), $2.95 (Aug 24-30)
Victory #2, (two covers $2.95) (Sep 14-20)
Walking Dead #1, $2.95 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)

Kenzer & Company: *Dungeons & Dragons: Where Shadows Fall* #2 (of 5), $3.50 (Sep)
Knights of the Dinner Table #84, $3.99 (Oct)
Knights of the Dinner Table: Illustrated #27, $2.99 (Oct)

Marvel Comics: *Captain American Vol. 3: Ice TP*, $12.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Fantastic Four Vol. 2: Unthinkable TP, $17.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Incredible Hulk #62, $2.25 (Oct. 5-11)
Iron Man #73, $2.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Kingpin #5, $2.50 (Oct. 5-11)
Marvel 1602 #3, $3.50 (Oct. 5-11)
Namor #7, $2.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Nyx #1, $2.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Paradise X: X, $2.99 (Aug 24-30)
Punisher #33, $2.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Runaways #7, $2.50 (Oct. 12-18)
Sentinel #7, $2.50 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)
Spectacular Spider-Man #5, $2.25 (Oct. 5-11)
Supreme Power #3, $2.99 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)
Ultimate Six #3, $2.25 (Oct. 5-11)
Ultimate X-Men #38, $2.25 (Oct. 5-11)
Venom #5, $2.25 (Sep. 21-27)
Weapon X #13, $2.99 (Sep. 21-27)

Moonstone: *Vampire The Masquerade: Isabel*, $4.95 (Aug)

Mvcreations: *Masters of the Universe Ltd Holofoil Ed* #1, $19.99 (Sp Ed $29.99) (Sep)

New Suit: *New Thing Vol. 2: Secrets*, $9.95 (Aug)

Oni Press: *Atomics: Spaced Out & Grounded In Snap City TP*, $12.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Midnight Mover #3 (Of 4), $2.99 (Jun 29-Jul 5)
Sidekicks Transfer Student TP Digest Edition, $11.95 (Oct. 5-11)
Midnight Mover #4 (of 4), $2.99 (Aug 10-16)

Overcast Comics: *The Gift* #2, $2.95 (Oct)

Radio Comix: *Furrlough* #128, $2.99 (Aug)
Genus #61, $3.50 (Aug)

Random House: *Will Eisner's Fagin The Jew GN*, $15.95 (Sep)

Rebellion: *2000 AD* #1357, $3.75 (Nov. 2-8)
2000 AD #1358, $3.75 (Nov. 2-8)

Satyr Play Productions: *Satyr Color Special* #1, $2.95 (Oct)

Simon & Schuster: *Little Vampire Does Kung-Fu*, $12.95 (Sep)
Who's Got Game: Ant Or Grasshopper, $16.95 (Sep)
Who's Got Game: Lion Or The Mouse, $16.95 (Sep)

Sirius Entertainment: *Dogwitch* #7, $2.95 (Sep)
Kreeky Playground TP, $9.99 (Aug)

Ssscomics.Com: *SSS Comics Presents Eclipse and Vega* #1, $2.95 (Oct)

TCZ Studio: *Celestial Zone Vol. 2* #3, $9.50 (Oct)

TokyoPop: *Chobits Vol. 8 GN (of 8)*, $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Dragon Hunter Vol. 3 GN (of 9), $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Fake Vol. 3 GN (of 7), $9.99 (Sep 7-13)
G-Gundam Vol. 3 GN (of 3), $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Initial D Vol. 8 GN (of 23), $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)
King of Hell Vol. 3 GN (of 5), $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Lupin III Vol. 8 GN (of 14), $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Planetes Vol. 1 GN (of 3), $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Ragnarok Vol. 8 GN (of 10), $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)
Rebound Vol. 3 GN (of 10), $9.99 (Aug 3-9)
Rebound Vol. 4 GN (of 11), $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)
The Kindaichi Case Files Vol. 3 GN (of 10), $9.99 (Oct. 5-11)

Tony Raiola: *Dick Tracy Large Feature Comic* #3 Reprint Edition, $9.50 (Oct)
Krazy & Ignatz Dailies Vol. 4 Pacific Comic Club Ed, $9.50 (Oct)

Too Hip Gottago Graphics: *Wahoo Morris Singles Collection*, $7.95 (Aug)

Unredcomicbooks: *Strange Tales From The Broken City GN*, $11.95 (Oct)

Viz: *Shonen Jump Vol. 1* #11 Nov 2003, $4.95 (Sept. 28-Oct. 4)

Wonderella: *Ogner Stump's One Thousand Sorrows GN*, $9.00 (Oct)

Archie fights teen alcohol use

Custom comic provides information on that and more for NY kids

Archie Comics has teamed with New York's Westchester County in an effort to prevent teen-age drinking and provide other information to help children.

The company will design and publish a custom comic book dealing with issues that confront teen-agers, including under-age alcohol consumption. Archie and his friends can also be found on a new cable TV commercial and on the outside and inside of the county's Bee-Line buses.

Money to fund the project will come from what the county takes in from drunk driving arrests that by law must be used on public-education programs.

Chairman and Co-Publisher of Archie Comics Michael Silberkleit said, "For more than 60 years, Archie and his pals have been role models for youngsters across America.

"We are honored and proud to have been asked by Westchester County Executive Andy Spano to create a custom comic-book that helps kids deal with the problems of underage drinking, bullying, communicating with parents, and stress."

Spano said, "Our goal is not to preach to kids, but see that they get the right information so they can make good decisions.

TM & © 2003 Archie Comic Publications

Archie is going to teach kids about the dangers of alcohol.

"The Archie comic books are a wonderful vehicle to talk about drinking, bullying, and stress in a way that hits home. We think it will be a model program that we expect other counties to emulate.

"After so many highly publicized teen drinking incidents in Westchester, parents asked us to come up with a public-education campaign similar to our 'Face Value' anti-smoking campaign last year directed at teen-age girls," Spano added. "So we did it, and it's a terrific partnership with Archie Comics."

The comic book will contain a lesson plan for teachers and will be distributed by the county's office of drug prevention and in middle schools through out the county.

In addition to the stories, the book will contain games, related website addresses and phone numbers, and "no drinking or drugging" pledge card for students to carry.

Archie President and Co-Publisher Richard Goldwater added, "As an American icon, Archie delivers a positive message to Westchester youth in the pages of this comic and in the county-wide public service message."

To help students and parents, two new websites have been set up. The website for teens can be found at *www.westchestergov.com/teendrinking*; the one for parents and teachers can be found at *www.westchester gov.com/stopdwi*. ✦

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ALL-STAR COMICS #7 (DC, 1941) CGC NM- 9.2 OFF-WHITE TO WHITE PAGES
SOLD FOR $4,255

BATMAN #165 (DC, 1964) CONDITION: VF/NM
SOLD FOR $105.80

SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES #10 GAINES FILE PEDIGREE (EC, 1953) CGC NM+ 9.6 WHITE PAGES
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WARREN KREMER - ORIGINAL ART FOR SPOOKY SPOOKTOWN #17, COMPLETE 5-PAGE WENDY STORY "SECOND-HAND WANDS" (HARVEY, 1960S)
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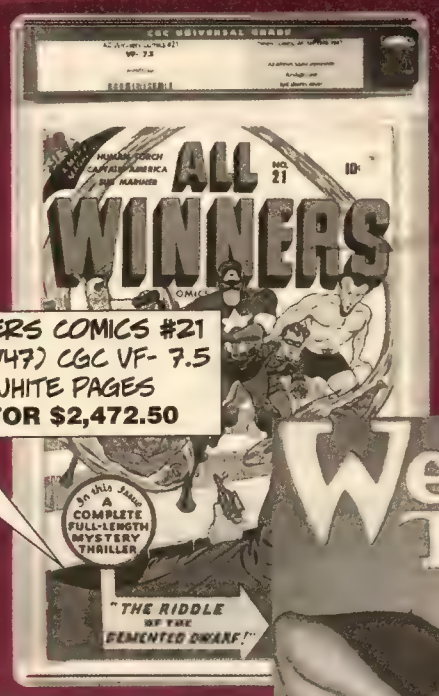

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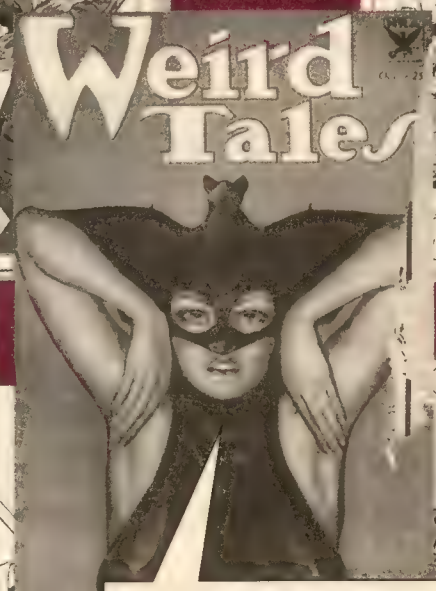

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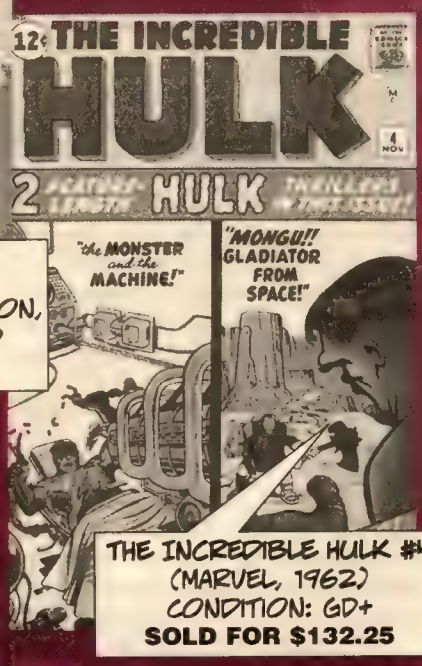

THE INCREDIBLE HULK #4 (MARVEL, 1962) CONDITION: GD+
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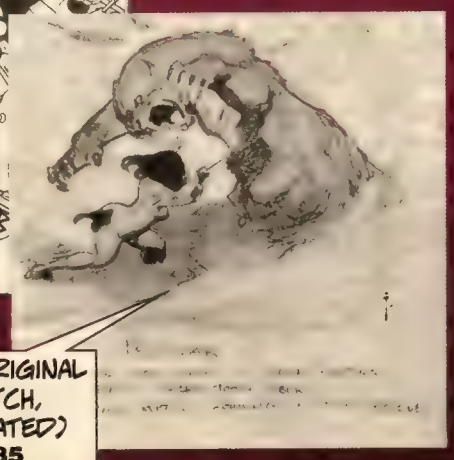

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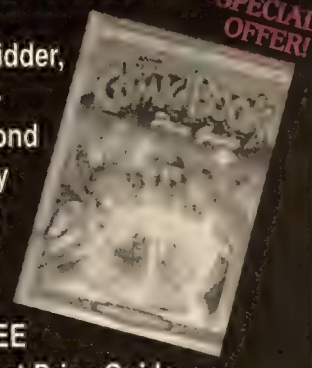

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A book that belongs in every library

Tony's top recommendation for the year

I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live by the light that I have. I must stand with anybody that stands right, stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong.

—Abraham Lincoln

By **Tony Isabella**

Joe Kubert's *Yossel: April 19, 1943* (ibooks, $24.95) is the best graphic novel of the year. I realize we're still two months and change away from the end of the year, but, as I sit here at my keyboard, unable to tear my thoughts from the haunting images and overwhelming events of this intensely personal story, I honestly can't imagine this incredible work *not* being the best graphic novel of the year.

Yossel is "a story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the courageous last stand against Nazi barbarism taken by the Jewish residents of that prison within a city. Published in this 60th anniversary year of the Uprising, it is a timeless tale of enduring human spirit in the face of agonizing inhumanity. In its unflinching examination of the evil men do, it reminds us why we must stand with those who oppose such evil, often with their very lives."

The title hero of *Yossel* is a 15-year-old boy living in Nazi-occupied Poland. The Nazis take his home and force his family to relocate to the Warsaw ghetto, a world of overcrowded tenements and cruel depravation. Yet, as awful as this world is, it's merely a way station on the road to the greater hell of the concentration camps. As more Jews arrive, the Nazis start shipping others out to their intended final destinations.

Yossel is a talented artist, and it is this gift which spares him, when his family is sent to the camps. His drawings have amused the soldiers who rule Warsaw, and they protect him as they would a favored pet. He shares the information he quietly learns from the soldiers (and the extra food they gave him) with his fellows, until there is no choice but to oppose their captors openly.

Kubert's medium for the telling of this story is rough pencil art. These are the drawings Yossel sees in his head, unfinished, awaiting the opportunity to commit them to paper. The bold choice adds a nightmarish quality to the stark reality of the horrors of this story, a quality reinforced by the first-person captions which accompany them. The reader gets to know Yossel, to know his dreams and his despair and his soul.

The boldness of Kubert's approach becomes more profound with the realization that Yossel *is* Kubert, who, save for the persistence of his family, might not have lived to become one of the comics world's most respected creators. In early 1926, while Kubert was still in his mother's womb, his family made their first attempt to leave Poland for America and were turned away due to his mother's pregnancy. Two months after his birth, they tried again and were allowed to travel to what would become their new home.

Watching Yossel draw the super-heroes and caveman and cowboys and dinosaurs that Kubert would bring to readers during his long career in comics, knowing the distance between these fantastic and heroic images and the soul-numbing life of the ghetto and monstrous reality of the camps, sent a shiver through my own soul. Though I have only met him a few times, I envisioned the enormous hole in my world Kubert's absence would have created.

No amiable bear of a man who struck me as a fit receptacle for the sheer artistry and power of his work. No Hawkman. No Tor. No Rock. No Enemy Ace. No generations of writers and artists taking inspiration from his comics, as I have. No sons following in his artistic footsteps. No Kubert School. No graduates learning from the masters and going on to create masterful works of their own. No *Fax from Sarajevo.* Sixty years and a reality away, this sense of loss makes *Yossel* almost too much to bear.

Yossel is eloquent proof of how compelling comic books can be. It ranks with the very best the art form has produced and deserves a place in every library — not just comics library — *every* library, personal or public, worth the name. It is as unforgettable a story as any I have ever read …

… and, if *Yossel* makes you think about the other Joe Kuberts, all the other men and women who could have shared their gifts with us, had they not been brutally murdered, that's all the better.

We need to think about that more often.

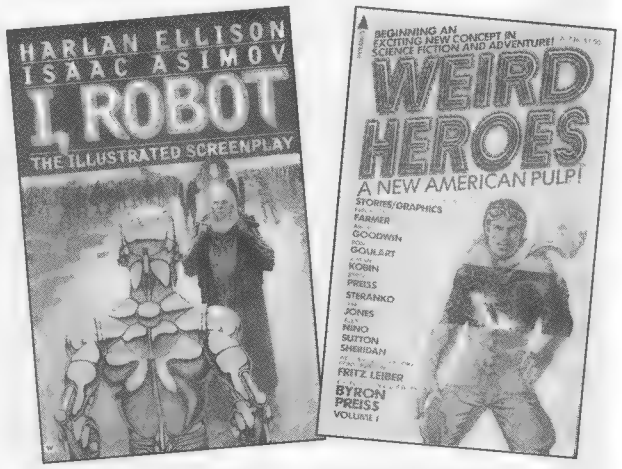
Publishers Weekly, called ibooks "America's fastest growing small publisher," one of those quotes which doesn't necessarily mean anything to readers like you and me. Let's face it: The main reason we care about the commercial success of the books and comics we read is that, if they sell well, there will be more of them for us to enjoy. Growth isn't a big issue for me — despite all of those e-mail offers I receive.

If a publisher wants to impress me, sending me a catalog like the one which came with *Yossel* will do the trick. Covering ibooks releases from February through May of 2004, the catalog had several books I wanted as soon as I saw their listings.

In December, look for a "digitally remastered" collection of *Terminator: The Burning Earth* ($17.95) by seriously underrated Ron Fortier and legend-to-be Alex Ross. In January, *Amelia Rules! What Makes You Happy* ($14.95) reprints #5-10 of Jimmy Gownley's wonderful comic-book series. February brings *The Official Forensic Files Casebook* ($15.95) by the editors of Court TV, just the ticket for us fans of *CSI* and police procedurals in general.

March is a blockbuster month for ibooks. For me, there's *The Science of Superman* ($14.95) by Mark Wolverton and a new edition of *Wild Cards 2: Aces High* ($7.99), the shared universe series edited by George R.R. Martin. For my son Eddie, there's *The Ides of Mad* ($9.95), the reissue of the classic *Mad* paperback, and *Marauder Man* ($14.95) by Kenneth T. Brown, "the story of the medium bomber that made D-Day possible."

April brings *I, Robot: The Illustrated Screenplay* ($14.95) by Harlan Ellison and Isaac Asimov, a book that has been out of print for a decade; *Bloodlines* ($14.95), a definitely cool-looking crime graphic novel by Varanda and Ange; and *Weird Heroes* Vol. 1 ($6.99), a long out-of-print anthology of adventure hero stories by beloved writers like Philip Jose Farmer, Archie Goodwin, and Ron Goulart.



Out-of-print books including I, Robot: The Illustrated Screenplay and Weird Heroes will be reprinted next April by ibooks.

Good reading there.

May is equally intriguing. *The Orc's Treasure* ($9.99) is an original manga by Kevin J. Anderson and the unique Alex Nino. *Fog* ($14.95) is a private detective graphic novel by Tardi and Leo Malet. *Straczynski Unplugged* ($11.95) is a collection of stories by J. Michael Straczynski, creator of *Babylon 5* and current writer of *Amazing Spider-Man*. Then, there's *Ghostbusters* by Sholly Fisch ($11.95), the first original novel based on one of the best comedy-horror films of all time.

The above are just the ibooks releases that interest *me*. If you visit the company's website, you'll find additional suspense, mystery, history, horror, and science-fiction titles already in print or coming soon. With many ties to comics and comics-industry creators, *ibooks* is definitely worth watching.

www.ibooks.net

Moving on to the *Tony's Tips* mailbox, we have this e-mail from reader Rob Staeger:

I wrote the mystery note in this week's *CBG*, about returning to the place where I had bought comics as a kid (The Paper Peddler in Avalon, N.J.) when I was at the beach during the summer. It was a strange feeling, being there all grown up and not seeing many comics I wanted to buy. As a regular of my neighborhood comics shop, I get almost anything I want already. My trip to The Paper Peddler was more nostalgia than a serious comics-buying trip. But I sure remember the comics I bought there. I nearly got hit by a car walking home reading the *All-Star Squadron/Infinity Inc.* team-up way back when.

I like your idea of beach newsstands loading up on Done in One issues from the landlocked comics shops. It's a great idea for a partnership. I hope someone reads your column and decides to give it a try.

Also from my e-mailbox, I heard from Kirk Kushin, responding to my report on the *Star Trek Experience* attraction at the Hilton Hotel in Las Vegas and my comments on the *X-Men Evolution* animated series. He wrote:

Your time-travel riff on the *Star Trek* ride was truly funny! Good stuff! I will probably hit the ride again, when I hit town for the upcoming comics convention — just so I can chuckle at your comments in person.

I'm a major fan of *X-Men Evolution* and I thought your comments on "Impact" were very interesting. I missed that episode — but one of the things I enjoy about the show is how it presents the X-Men mythos to my kids (all under 10). There is no way I would let my children near the current issues of *Uncanny X-Men*. My 9-year-old daughter has asked to read it, but I always tell her no. "It's not appropriate," I say, and she gives me a shrug and goes back to her Archies and age-appropriate DCs.

I think the producers have always done an excellent job with the show and I was surprised to hear about the events of Mystique's "demise." While it won't cause me to change my opinion about the series, it does makes me wonder what they were thinking. My kids are very much into the characters and events, and I would hate for this to send the wrong message. At least, now, I will be prepared to discuss that episode when we see it. I can just hear my "Why is it not right to push a petrified metamorph off a cliff?" conversation with them.

Please don't let your critique be the only words your readers hear about this otherwise-excellent show. People need to support (and enjoy) this quality presentation of Marvel's flagship title. I am always baffled concerning why Marvel doesn't give more support to a long-running cartoon about one of its franchises that also happened to be one of the more popular films of the summer! Marvel said it all, when it canceled the comic book based on *Evolution*. I saw the numbers, and they were, indeed, low, but what a great entry point into the Marvel universe for young readers! It's clear from the direction of the regular X-Men titles and the overall Marvel sales strategies that the company is chasing the ever-dwindling market of mature comic-book fans.

Don't you think a marketing department worth its salt would have included a subscription form in the *millions* of *X-Men Evolution* Burger King Toys that were purchased a few years back? Even a small percentage of return would have catapulted the *Evolution* title high up the sales chart, right next to those few Marvel titles that can even get close to the 100,000 sales mark!

I guess I'm sounding like a Grumpy Old Comic Book Fan! All I ask is that you pass onto your readers who are also long-time X-Men fans that *Evolution* is a place where great stories are being told! The DVDs of the entire first season just hit the market. They are sold as four singles or a collector's four-pack. People need to do themselves a favor and shell out the $10 — the equivalent of three or four comics — and enjoy the series themselves or give it as a Christmas present! The show has a great message, is loads of fun, and gives a lot of screen time to Kitty Pryde!

You're right, Kirk. I should have made it clear that I, too, am a fan of *X-Men Evolution*. It's got enough continuity to please the hardcore Marvel universe readers, terrific characterizations, and a generally good message. A recent story featuring the return of Storm's cousin Spyke hit all of those high notes and was a great example of how good the series can be.

Keep those e-mails, letters, and review copies coming my way, my loyal legions of *Tony's Tips* readers. They keep me honest and this column in business. ✦

***Tony's Tips** is © 2003 Tony Isabella. Comments on this column or review items for future columns should be sent to Tony at: Tony's Tips, P.O. Box 1502, Medina, OH 44258. You can also e-mail Tony at: **tonyisa@ohio.net**.*

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YARF! NOT TO MENTION THE COMMON FACT THAT THE MOST LIKELY SUSPECT IS NEVER THE PERPETRATOR! DON'T YOU READ?
AWW--!
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Fiendish ghosts from beneath the ice rise up to menace skater Irenya Spookskaya, so Elvira teams up with her literary pooch pal Itchbone to freeze those monsters' assets, in the classic **"Elvira on Ice!"**

ELVIRA #126

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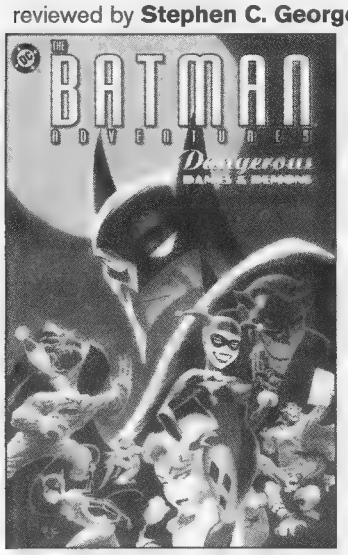
or ohso@krause.com

Batman Advs.: Dangerous Dames & Demons DC

$14.95, color, 192 pgs., available now
Writer: Paul Dini; Artist: Bruce Timm and others
reviewed by **Stephen C. George**



Diehard fans of the *Batman* animated series will already have most of the stories in this collection. But for those who are latecomers to the comic-book works of Emmy Award winners Paul Dini and Bruce Timm, this makes for convenient one-stop shopping for their best stories in print.

Included here is the classic *Mad Love* tale that introduced Harley Quinn to comics (and that won an Eisner). Also part of the collection are reprints from the *Batman Adventures Annuals* #1 and #2, which feature, respectively, a classic confrontation with The Joker and a memorable team-up of Batman and The Demon against Ra's al Ghul. Rounding out the collection is a series of hard-to-find short pieces, including the modern classic "24 Hours," featuring art by Bruce Timm and the late Dan DeCarlo.

Dini and Timm both provide funny and enlightening behind-the-scenes notes to each story, which alone almost make this collection worth the cover price. A must-have for any animation fan's collection, and a great addition to the fireside table, if you're looking for fun evening reading.

Batman Advs. TPB

PRO	CON
Stellar collection.	None, if you haven't read 'em already.

GRADE: A

www.dccomics.com

Acredale Kolor Komics Kollection Wild Lion

$7.95, color, 64 pgs., available now
Writer and artist: Harold Buchholz
reviewed by **Jim Johnson**

Anyone remember *Apathy Kat*? Several years ago, this quirky title was published by the now-defunct Entity Comics, and then disappeared once that publisher closed its doors.

Fortunately, Buchholz has decided to self-publish a repackaging of the series' first two issues, with some new stories on the way, at least according to the book's introduction.

Acredale is the home of Thomas K. Wigglesworth School, where Apathy Kat and his friends attend class under the tyrannical teachings of Professor Straightlace.

And the smooth AK revels playing the role of thorn in Straightlace's side, foiling him at every turn in Straightlace's never-ending crusade to trip him up.

There's no side-splitting laughs, but the charm lies in the personalities of characters, like the beatnik bear Java who looks as if he's found work after years of hawking Post Super Sugar Crisp, or sniveling teacher's pet Poofy. Buchholz' art is simple enough to work with the book's smaller digest format, although the \$8 price is high for such a size. But fans who missed *Apathy Kat* or like funny animals will find it worthwhile.

Wild Lion Press
1325 White Marlin Lane
Virginia Beach, VA 23464
www.acredale.com

Acredale Kollection

PRO	CON
The Acredale gang is back.	But they're charging too much.

GRADE: B

.hack//Legend of the Twilight TokyoPop

$9.99, b/w, 196 pgs., available now
Writer: Tatsuya Hamazaki; Artist: Rei Izumi
reviewed by **S.A. Bennett**

I'm not a fan of the *.hack* anime, maybe because it's just sort of a blah take on the much-overused "trapped inside a virtual-reality game" plot where the characters wandered around bummed out for the most part.

It's usually the other way around, but the manga is better, though it's clear from the story and art that it's supposed to skew more towards girls. In this retelling, it's a pair of sisters who get trapped in "The World" and it's a lot more fun watching them exploring their new environment with a sense of joy and wonder.

They take the time to actually have fun, even if that means dress-up scenes, first kisses, super-deformity, and goofy comedy involving mascot animals. (*Lord of the Rings* it's not.) While it's undeniably slight and silly, it's enjoyable and a way of getting the target audience into role-playing games in general and epic fantasy in particular.

www.tokyopop.com

.hack//Twilight

PRO	CON
Cute girls.	Mascot animals.

GRADE: B

PICK OF THE WEEK

Human Target #2

DC/Vertigo

\$2.95, color, 32 pgs., available now
Writer: Peter Milligan; Artist: Javier Pulido

If Moore, Gaiman, and Morrison are The Beatles, Stones, and Who of the British comics invasion, then Peter Milligan is The Kinks: prolific, crafty, intelligent, and rewarding deeper exploration, even as he flies lower on the radar than his more flamboyant colleagues. His latest gem is the new *Human Target* series, picking up from his earlier 1998 revival of the back-page DC character from the mid-'70s. With #2, he serves notice that this will be as edgy and controversial a series as the American comics market has seen, with only the thinnest veneer of fantasy as a safety net.

The Human Target is Christopher Chance, a freelance adventurer who makes his money impersonating people in danger and using his skills to turn the tables on the menace. Here, Chance finds himself drawn into a web of corporate intrigue, blackmail, and murder, centered on a survivor of the World Trade Center disaster who faked his own death. Milligan's treatment of Sept. 11 and the perspective he infuses into his amoral cast of characters are certain to raise eyebrows, but this tough-minded approach is critical to the impact of the story.

If not for Milligan's literary excellence, the presence of Javier Pulido's art would alone be a good reason to collect *Human Target*. Pulido, recently seen in the pages of *Catwoman*, is a master of the new DC house style of clean, simple storytelling, well-spotted blacks, and expressionist backgrounds. The spirit of Alex Toth hangs heavy over these pages, and that's never a bad thing.

The political context of *Human Target* #2 is bound to leave some people howling with rage. But the quality of the product ensures no one will find fault with this book as an example of outstanding, intelligent, and mature graphic fiction.

Human Target #2

PRO	CON
Tight and suspenseful hardboiled story.	Subject matter may offend touchy patriots.

GRADE: A

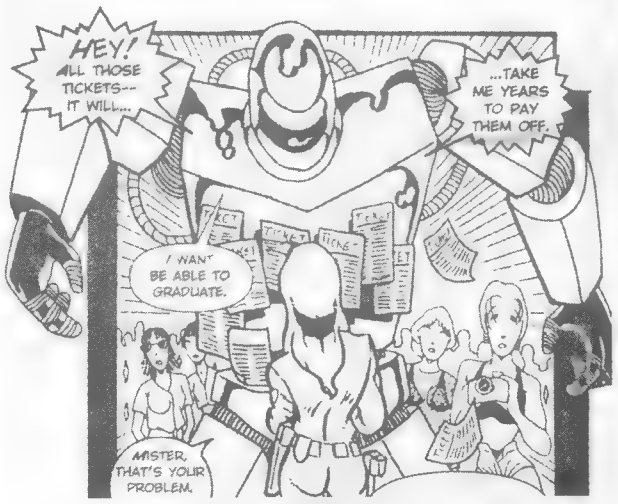
reviewed by **Rob Salkowitz**
www.dccomics.com

Ninja High School Annual #15 — Antarctic Press

$4.95, b/w, 48 pgs., available now
Writers and artists: Various
reviewed by **Jack Abramowitz**

Once again, the *Ninja High School Annual* collects pin-ups and stories submitted by fans. And, once again, it's a mixed bag.

Some of the pin-ups are nice, as is the art in some of the stories. But there's a difference between being an amateur — *i.e.*, performing as a labor of love — and being amateurish. Sadly, much of the art and most of the writing is amateurish. The editing is equally sloppy.



Let's take Robert Shum's contribution, "Crisis on Infinite Ninja High Schools." This tale stars Tomorrow Girl and two alternate-universe counterparts, Yesterday Girl and Now Girl. (Yes, "Today Girl" would have been more appropriate, but she would have had the same "T" logo as Tomorrow Girl.)

Throughout the story, the protagonist's name is misspelled "Tomarrow Girl," except for two instances where it's "Tomorow Girl." If they're going to be inconsistent, you'd think they'd stumble on the right spelling at least once!

Similarly, Michael McClain's "Mall Battle" features apparently random italics throughout the text.

Jerry Gonzales III's "Forever Zetra" has a few clever lines but is the most homemade-looking contribution in the issue.

It's nice that AP lets the fans have their moment in the sun, but much of it is not worth the price of admission. Even the better bits are hardly required reading. For the die-hard *NHS* reader only.

NHS Annual #15

PRO	CON
Amateur contributors.	Amateurish results.

GRADE: C

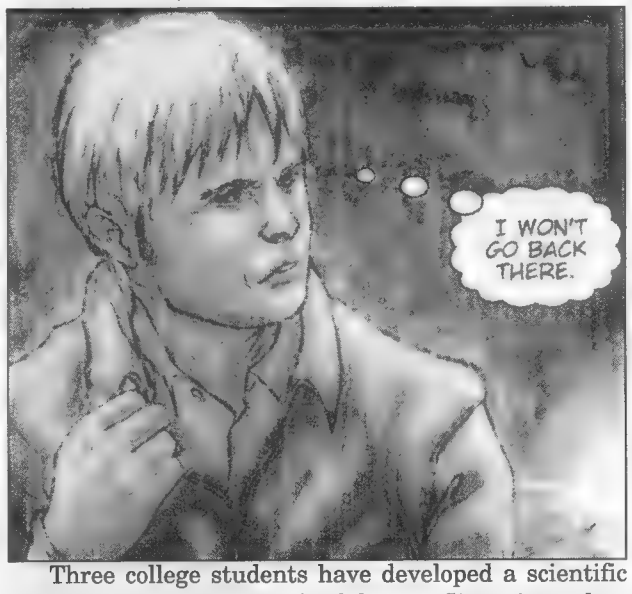
www.antarctic-press.com

Wake the Dead #1 — Idea + Design Works

$3.99, color, 32 pgs., available now
Writer: Steve Niles; Artist: Milx
reviewed by **Jim Johnson**

All right, it's official. When it comes to the undead, Niles is this generation's Stephen King.

Readers have been creeped out by vampires in his *30 Days of Night*, outsmarted by his Cal McDonald stories, and can now be grossed out by his latest horror comic book, a sort of macabre version of *Flatliners*.



Three college students have developed a scientific means to reanimate the dead, but conflict arises when one of them suggests moving beyond mere laboratory animals and testing their methods on a human cadaver. One car accident later, this suggestion is a step closer to reality.

The introductory sequence in which a bloody, half-disemboweled, resurrected pig runs amok in the lab is downright creepy. The remainder of the issue, though, is little more than a mildly contrived setup for the remainder of the series, complete with the lowlifes who mock the experiment but later look as if they're about to become its subject.

Anyone who's a Niles fan will already have boarded this train for the whole trip by this point, and the early breather is forgivable in anticipation of what lies ahead.

And perfectly complementing Niles' thriller are the disgustingly beautiful illustrations by Milx, who revels in drawing creepiness right down to every last dangling blood vessel.

Those who haven't boarded yet? Get on now.

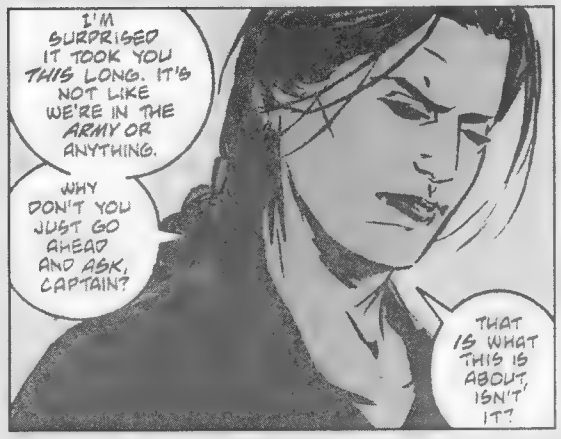
Wake the Dead #1

PRO	CON
More horror from Niles.	Slow after initial scene.

GRADE: A-

www.idwpublishing.com

SERIES SPOTLIGHT


I'M SURPRISED IT TOOK YOU THIS LONG. IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE IN THE ARMY OR ANYTHING.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO AHEAD AND ASK, CAPTAIN?
THAT IS WHAT THIS IS ABOUT, ISN'T IT?

Gotham Central #6-10 — DC

$2.50@, color, 32 pgs.@, available now
Writer: Greg Rucka; Artist: Michael Lark

Focusing on Gotham City's police department and not its costumed vigilantes (except for the occasional cameo by a certain Dark Knight), *Gotham Central* gives readers that extra peek behind the curtain into an area of the DC universe that's rarely, if ever, focused on.

"Half a Life" focuses squarely on Detective Renee Montoya and her relationships with her family, her co-workers, and, it is revealed, her female lover. The revelation of Montoya's sexual orientation isn't a total surprise, but it was unnecessary to the story. It hasn't been explored deeply before, but, then, with few exceptions, neither have the private lives of any supporting DC universe cast member. Now, Rucka pulls no punches, giving the Gotham P.D. its second homosexual member.

And that's where there's a problem. Was it really necessary to make virtually the *only* two non-costumed but strong female characters (outside of Lois Lane) of the DC universe — Maggie Sawyer and now, Renee Montoya — lesbians? Sawyer's sexuality hasn't really been an issue for several years, since a story arc in the Super-titles and now, here, where it is used as a story element. Otherwise, she's simply portrayed as a competent police officer who cares for the people in her department, just like Montoya. A scene in "Half-Life" in which Montoya and Sawyer discuss Montoya's "outing" is a good attempt at covering the situation, but portions of it fall flat. Sawyer takes no action to make the rest of the department stop their sexually oriented statements, something that could be actionable by Montoya.

Gotham Central #6-10

PRO	CON
Taut police procedural.	Gratuitous gender games.

Aside from this unnecessary plot element which lowered the overall grade, the rest of the story arc is excellent, with Montoya framed for a murder she didn't commit and a run-in with Two-Face. If you're not reading this series, pick it up.

GRADE A-

Brent Frankenhoff

www.dccomics.com

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Essential Marvel Team-Up	A-
flcl Vol. 1	C
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Lone #1	B+
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Skizz	A
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Styx Taxi #1	B+
Super Friends: Truth, Justice, Peace	B
Wildguard: Casting Call #1	A

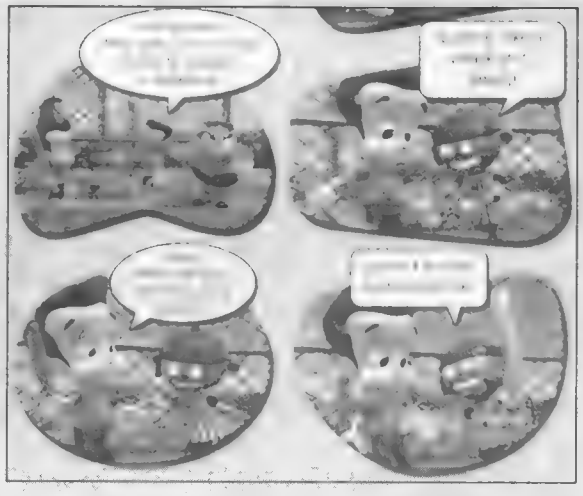
COMICS GUIDE

By Maggie Thompson

Adventures of Jimmy Neutron, Boy Genius — TokyoPop

Anna Kernbaum, Evan Gore, Heather Lombard, Jed Spingarn, Steven Banks, Darwin Vickers, color, ISBN 159182401X, 96 pgs., $7.99, available now.

One of eight "Cine-Manga" titles from the publisher, this Nickelodeon tie-in pops animation images on top of a tech-look background in a way that should please fans of the series. The all-ages title, of course, stars the 10-year-old genius inventor, and the stories are straight from the show. "Brobot" [right] and "The Big Pinch" were the third show, first broadcast Sept. 13 last year; "Hall Monster" and "Hypno-Birthday to You" were the ninth, first broadcast Nov. 1 last year. The stories are well put together and entertaining and the concept of combining existing pictures with their script works. Dell did a successful low-tech version in the 1940s and 1950s, and this series shows it still works.



www.tokyopop.com

El Cazador #1-2 — CrossGen

Chuck Dixon, Steve Epting, color, 32 pgs. @, $2.95 @; available now.

OK, lots of people have commented about high art standards at CrossGen — but this pirate series is a showcase for some of the very best art that even CrossGen has used to date. Epting's worked in comics since the days of First Comics, and his main project for CrossGen had been *Crux*. As good as *Crux* has been, his work in *El Cazador* is even more impressive. While some panels feature isolated figures, in general, page after page of Epting's work is packed with confident detailing of figures, costumes, sailing ships, and action, action, action. Moreover, thanks to Senior Writer Dixon (who's also worked in comics for more than 15 years — including on *Crux* with Epting), it's another of the titles the guys can hand their gals: The focal character is a smart, skilled woman who has (at least for the time being) taken over a ship crawling with a pirate crew. The storytelling is outstanding, and the series is selling briskly. Don't miss it.

www.crossgen.com

Batman: Detective No. 27 — DC

OUR LATE PRESIDENT'S FAVORITE BOOK...
...TONIGHT, WITH A DELICIOUS DASH OF IRONY, IT BECOMES YET ANOTHER WEAPON IN OUR REIGN OF TERROR AGAINST THE ENEMY!
JOE MILLER'S JOKE BOOK

Michael Uslan, Peter Snejbjerg, 96 pgs., hardcover, color, $19.95, ships Nov. 19.

Watch out! DC's variety of Elseworlds offerings over the years have made some readers jaded with the very concept — and *that* could mean they'll pass up this delightful, rich, detail-packed pastiche that intertwines familiar fictional icons with well-known historical personalities. Starting with the title, of course, it's clear that the story will be loaded with in-group references. After a few pages, it's equally clear that the quality of the story and its plot is high. When Bruce Wayne is orphaned in *1929*, *this* version of the detective who took over *Detective Comics* with #27 in our universe is also set on his path. That path leads to involvement with a secret organization of detectives, preceded in that group by Allan Pinkerton and Teddy Roosevelt, among others. And that organization must contend with another — this one with a sinister goal, also evolved over decades. The art is remarkable, and not all readers will catch references like the one to the left. But that's one of the signs of great comics: details that reward repeated reading. As this does.

THAT...THAT'S MY TEACHER FROM--
FROM THE ORIENT?
I KNEW YOU'D HAVE TO BE BROUGHT HERE BEFORE YOU'D BELIEVE ME.
THEN YOU REALLY DID SHADOW ME WHILE I WAS ABROAD FOR TEN YEARS! BUT WHY?
SHADOW YOU? HARDLY. WE CHOSE YOU, BRUCE... WHEN YOU WERE TWELVE.
THE SOCIETY ARRANGED YOUR EDUCATION. WE DECIDED THAT WITH THE RIGHT TRAINING, YOU COULD GROW UP TO BECOME THE DETECTIVE MOST CAPABLE OF BREAKING THIS CASE.

34

www.dccomics.com

Boneyard Vol. 2 — NBM

$9.95, b/w, 96 pgs., available Jan. 4
Writer and artist: Richard Moore
reviewed by **Nathan Melby**

Richard Moore's *Boneyard* is one of the freshest comics on the market. With a funny, diverse cast of characters, it's consistently funny, but the second volume, collecting #5-8, features some of the weaker issues of the titles in the so-far-solid run.

After defeating Satan in the first story arc, the gang faces what some would view as an even greater menace: the IRS. While the thought is there, the story isn't. It comes off as disjointed, especially with the voluptuous Nessie trying to seduce the main character and the crew trying odd schemes to pay back the $500,000 owed to the government.

This leads to the infamous swimsuit issue, which does not make an appearance in the trade! The book just ends in mid-story with the funny parts yet to come. On top of that, readers might be annoyed by the fact there are no markers — or even covers — to let them know when they have finished an installment.

This is not to say that the trade is bad; it has its funny moments (basically anything with Glump) and even a predictably amusing sequence when the tiny vampire Abbey boxes the giant werewolf Ralph in a charity event.

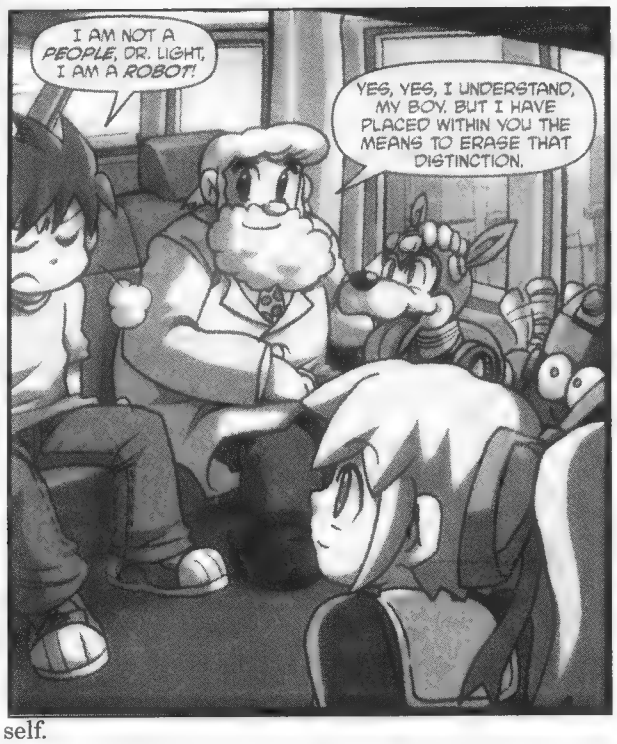
While the trade is still worth the money, there is better *Boneyard* out there. However, this trade is still a must for completists.

www.nbmpublishing.com

Megaman #1 — Dreamwave

$2.95, color, 32 pgs., available now
Writer: Brian Augustyn; Artist: Mic Fong
reviewed by **Jack Abramowitz**

Megaman, the star of videogames and animation, now enters the world of comics. He's not really a "man" in any sense of the word. He is a robot in the form of a boy. As Rocky, the "son" of genius inventor Dr. Light, he must attend his first day of junior high school. As Megaman, he must hunt for saboteurs attacking his "father's" works. The latter usually involves battling other robots, much larger than him-


I AM NOT A PEOPLE, DR. LIGHT, I AM A ROBOT!
YES, YES, I UNDERSTAND, MY BOY. BUT I HAVE PLACED WITHIN YOU THE MEANS TO ERASE THAT DISTINCTION.

self.

To say that *Megaman* resembles Osamu Tezuka's *Astro Boy* is to state the obvious. That is not necessarily a bad thing. Many comics and cartoon characters are inspired to various degrees by previous works. Even the venerable Superman and Batman drew inspiration from prior characters. Since Astro Boy's current series of trade paperbacks is hardly an impulse purchase for the casual young reader, *Megaman* is something Astro's fan might enjoy. (Conversely, kids who are into *Megaman* might then be introduced to *Astro Boy*.)

This comic book doesn't start on Day One of Megaman's creation, but it is "ground-floor" enough for newcomers to step right in.

www.dreamwave.com

Megaman #1

PRO	CON
Megaman. Cool.	Where's Astro Boy?

GRADE: A-

The Wandering Ones: Ghost Wind — Keenspot

$12.95, b/w, 112 pgs., available now
Writer and artist: Clint Hollingsworth
reviewed by **Jim Johnson**

Many comics publishers have tentatively begun to

THEY NOT ONLY MANAGED TO SNEAK UP ON US BUT THEY GOT PAST SOME OF THE BEST DETECTION EQUIPMENT WE HAVE! AND THEY...
AND THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND ME AREN'T THEY?
OH YEAH.

embrace the Internet as a publishing tool, but what little output there's been has been restricted to online reprints of existing comics. Keenspot, however, has been taking the opposite approach for a few years now, publishing independent, original works on its website and then collecting several of these into a traditional comic-book format.

This comic book ironically bypasses that format entirely, moving from the Web directly to a trade paperback. Considering the relative state of anonymity that most of Keenspot's output remains entangled in, this is a gutsy move, indeed, for there are few who would be inclined to spend $13 for an unknown property. And those who are, unfortunately, won't find anything terribly impressive.

This book collects the first year's worth of Hollingsworth's strip about a group of wanderers in a post-apocalyptic Pacific northwest. Despite stiff facial expressions and uneven inking, Hollingsworth's art displays promising raw artistic talent. But the storyline has practically no excitement, as the characters drone on and meander about with little development and virtually no surprises. This was almost tolerable as a chapter-a-day strip, but as a 100-page single dose, it goes down hard.

Granted, Hollingsworth was hampered by a comic-strip format that typically doesn't seamlessly translate into a graphic novel. But it would have helped having a storyline that moved in a particular direction rather than just ... wandering.

Keenspot Entertainment
P.O. Box 1525
Temple City, CA 91780

Wandering Ones: Ghost Wind

PRO	CON
Web comic as a graphic novel.	It's a wandering one.

GRADE: C-

icandy #1 — DC

$2.50, color, 32 pgs., available now
Writers: Dan Abnett, Andy Lanning; Artist: Kalman Andrasofszky; reviewed by **S.A. Bennett**

As little as a decade ago, any boy able to strongly identify with a fictional female character would have been considered a suitable case for treatment, but nowadays boys regularly know the thrill of stepping into the pixel shoes of some *femme fatale* in any number of fighting games, and no one thinks twice — which is odd, since in *icandy* the game-obsessed lead really needs some help.

He's either borderline autistic or near a complete emotional meltdown, thanks in large part to an absentee father, working mother, and missing sister. So, when a female video character (who looks like his sister) comes to life, Matthew doesn't experience the stereotypical wondrous disbelief but more of a relieved "finally."

The writing is appropriately minimalist, the art different with a toned-down color scheme, and, as usual, we're not sure where any of this is leading. It could just be another high concept ready to be turned into a Hollywood blockbuster (or a videogame of its own) but it also displays a vivid sort of wish fulfillment and iconic avatar we haven't seen since Superman.

www.dccomics.com

icandy #1

PRO	CON
The title.	It's not enough.

GRADE: B

Doctor Octopus: Negative Exposure #1 — Marvel

$2.99, color, 40 pgs., available now
Writer: Brian K. Vaughan; Artist: Staz Johnson
reviewed by **Brett Weiss**

Storylines surrounding the "modern-day myth" of Spider-Man are apparently endless. As Marvel and its legion of fans celebrate *The Amazing Spider-Man* #500, the less-hyped *Doctor Octopus: Negative Exposure* #1 sneaks onto the stands, giving readers a well-rounded super-hero adventure filled with action, character development, and even a few tidbits to engage the intellect.

A fellow photographer for *The Daily Bugle* is confounded by Peter Parker's uncanny ability to take exciting photos of Spider-Man in the heat of battle. What frustrates him even more is Parker's nonchalant attitude about photography as an art form. Parker is per-

THE REVIEW CREW

Brent Frankenhoff

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Jim Johnson

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E-mail Jim at: JimsReview@Yahoo.com

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Brett Weiss

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Rob Salkowitz

Rob is a writer in Seattle, Wash. He's been reading and collecting comics since 1973 and has reviewed hundreds of titles for *ComicBase*.
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Stephen George

As a full-time magazine writer and editor, Stephen reads and reviews all manner of comics, books, games, and movies.
Review copies: 2131 W. 138th St., Clive, IA 50325.

fect as the unpretentious youngster who simply takes photos in order to pay the bills, and the reader wonders by story's end how the newly introduced photographer's growing disdain for Parker will manifest itself. Will he sabotage Parker's photos? Will he pull a Kenny Braverman and eventually become a super-villain? Will he team up with Doctor Octopus?

Speaking of the bad (but brainy) doctor, his portrayal here is interesting. The more organic-looking octopus tentacles (as redesigned by Humberto Ramos) are a bad idea, but Doc Ock's motivation for stealing a prized piece of Leonardo da Vinci art is a character-enlightening beauty.

Doc Ock: Negative Exposure

PRO	CON
Nice art, cool story.	Doc Ock's tentacles.

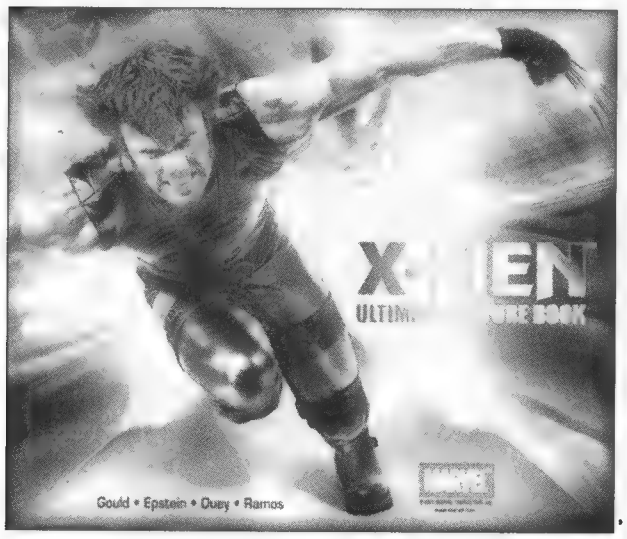
GRADE: A-

www.marvel.com

X-Men: Ultimate Picture Book #1 — Big Guy Books

$15.95, color, 48 pgs., available now
Artist: Robert Gould, *et al.*
reviewed by **Oliver Chin**

The familiar saga of Professor Xavier's students and their conflict with humankind and the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants is retold in this photo-illustrated children's book.



Instead of employing the movie's Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, and Ian McKellen, this title employs models dressed up as heroes and puts them through their paces with digitally enhanced poses.

As the story goes, the team of Cyclops, Wolverine, and company combats its nemeses of Magneto and huge, robotic Sentinels in a battle to save the human race.

Trying to cater to the latest generation of kids who are conditioned to being entertained by hi-tech FX in movies and videogames, this publisher uses a novel approach of creating in-your-face digital collages with a theatrical flair. Fans well versed in X-Men lore will find the costumed stand-ins cheesy. However, this colorful over-the-top interpretation will please youngsters who liked the movies and need encouragement to keep reading.

X-Men: Ult. Picture Book

PRO	CON
Tailored for tots of tech.	No substitute for classic issues.

GRADE: B+

www.bigguybooks.com

Fables: The Last Castle — DC/Vertigo

$5.95, color, 48 pgs., available now
Writer: Bill Willingham
Artists: Craig Hamilton, P. Craig Russell
reviewed by **Jack Abramowitz**

This *Fables* one-shot provides welcome insight into the backstory of how favorite fairytale characters came to be living surreptitiously in New York City.

Such series regulars as Boy Blue, Bluebeard, and Prince Charming are around for the tale, as well as some new blood. Major characters such as Red Riding Hood and Robin Hood (presumably no relation) are, no doubt, going to be familiar to most readers, while minor characters (such as Bierce's "Two Kings" and Dr. Swineheart, presumably of "The Three Army Surgeons") will be in-jokes for the fairytale-literate.

The tale is ostensibly one of war, but it is really one of romance between Blue and Red. (Would their kids have been purple?) Why isn't Red in the regular ongoing series? There hangs the tale.

The Hamilton-Russell art is appropriate for this story, set in fairytale times and lands. The story itself is as good as anything in the regular series, but expectations may be higher. When paying six bucks for a special, one might expect something beyond the norm. With *Fables* as good as it always is, that's a hard expectation to fill.

Fables: The Last Castle

PRO	CON
Excellent (as always).	Hard to be extra-special.

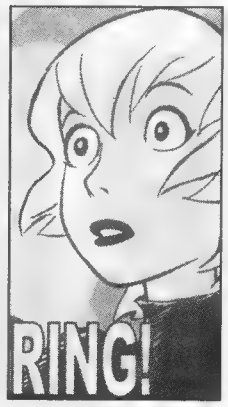
GRADE: A-

www.dccomics.com

Paper Biscuit: Half Life — Ronnie del Carmen

$10, b/w, 40 pgs., available now
Writer and artist: Ronnie del Carmen
reviewed by **Jim Johnson**

Del Carmen's asking a lot of his potential supporters. It's bad enough that he wants an ultra-steep $10 for a 40-page, travel-size comic book, but those who submit will find that the main story uses little more than half the pages; the rest comprise filler concept sketches. Ouch. It seems a little audacious for a struggling small-press guy.



But put the price and the filler aside, and in absolute terms the story that remains is a good one, indeed. Del Carmen tells the story of a struggling young woman who frequently escapes reality by succumbing to her own dream world, a world that subconsciously but ultimately guides her. His character speaks to all of us who at one time or another have sought the blissful oblivion of sleep in lieu of facing a bad day, and the story is done with an understated touch of both brilliance and inspiration.

But that price. Well, think of it like this: Maybe an expensive house or car or Golden Age comic book is out of reach. But an expensive independent comic book is not. $20 will buy a nicely executed comic book, a Starbuck's coffee, and maybe cabfare. Go for it.

Paper Biscuit: Half Life

PRO	CON
Inspirational escapefrom reality.	Costly drain on wallet.

GRADE: B+

www.ronniedelcarmen.com

Tuxedo Gin Vol. 2 — TokyoPop

$9.99, b/w, 192 pgs., available now
Writer and artist: Tokihiko Matsuura
reviewed by **S.A. Bennett**

If you've wondered how difficult it would be to come in on a manga series without starting with the first issue, I thought I'd pick a couple at random and see long it took me to be brought up to speed.

It helps that *Tuxedo Gin* couldn't be simpler or sillier if it tried; it's *Heaven Can Wait* if the dead boxer ended up in a penguin's body. He has to live out the lifespan of a penguin before he gets the chance to return to his own body, a situation that he accepts with fairly good humor. (I suppose being in a culture where reincarnation is a given would smooth out some of the bumps.) And he gets to live with the girl he loves — albeit as her pet.

Tuxedo Gin Vol. 2

PRO	CON
Gin.	Blows to the head.

GRADE: B

That's the set-up, on which hang lots and lots of silly situations of the low-brow sitcom variety. They work more often than you'd think, thanks to quick pacing and attractive characters.

www.tokyopop.com

Boys over Flowers Vol. 2 — TokyoPop

$9.99, b/w, 176 pgs., available now
Writer and artist: Yoko Kamio
reviewed by **S.A. Bennett**

Here's another experiment in what would happen, if you started a manga series with Volume Two instead of at the beginning. It was fairly easy to pick up the plot, thanks to a well-written "Story Thus Far" page.

It also doesn't hurt that American readers won't find the "entirely too-good-looking young people in love and hate" teen drama concept foreign. (After all,

that's what's turned the Fox summer show *The OC* into a surprise hit.)

Although school bullying and social pressure are frequently elements in manga featuring both boys and girls, the focus this time is directly on the subject: a girl who flatly refuses to except the status quo at her school of an elite based on money, privilege, and looks.

Of course, she's not advocating class warfare — she secretly loves one of the entirely too-pretty boys who publicly scorn her, which makes for scenes that are (to quote a *SNL* sketch) "as dramatic as a hospital scene in a Mexican soap opera."

Boy over Flowers Vol. 2

PRO	CON
The plot.	Perms on boys.

GRADE: B

Like a Mexican *telenovela*, it's overwrought but oddly endearing. Now, if someone could just explain all the penguins on the cover.

www.tokyopop.com

JLA-Z #1 — DC

$2.50, color, 36 pgs., available now
Writer: Mike McAvennie; Artists: Various
reviewed by **Brett Weiss**

JLA-Z #1 is a big disappointment, especially to long-time DC fans spoiled by the great *Who's Who: The Definitive Directory of the DC Universe* from the mid to late 1980s. The former is essentially a pin-up book, as each Justice League member (from Amazo to Green Arrow) is accompanied by a single paragraph of biographical text. The latter, on the other hand, is more encyclopedic in nature, with each entry featuring three specific topics: Personal Data, History, and Powers & Weapons. Comparisons aside, *JLA-Z* works fairly well within its unambitious constraints. The writing is fittingly succinct, explaining each character clearly and plainly within the limited space. The art runs the gamut from excellent (Jim Lee's Batman) to very good (Tom Nguyen's Firestorm) to disappointing (Scott Kolins's Captain Marvel) to downright lame (Pat Quinn and Walden Wong's Flash).

Regardless, kids will have fun cutting out the pictures and tacking them to their walls. Hardcore readers wanting something more substantive than *JLA-Z* (and more modern than *Who's Who*) should stick with the various *Secret Files & Origins* comic books.

www.dccomics.com

JLA-Z #1

PRO	CON
Purdy pictures.	Not enough info.

GRADE: C-

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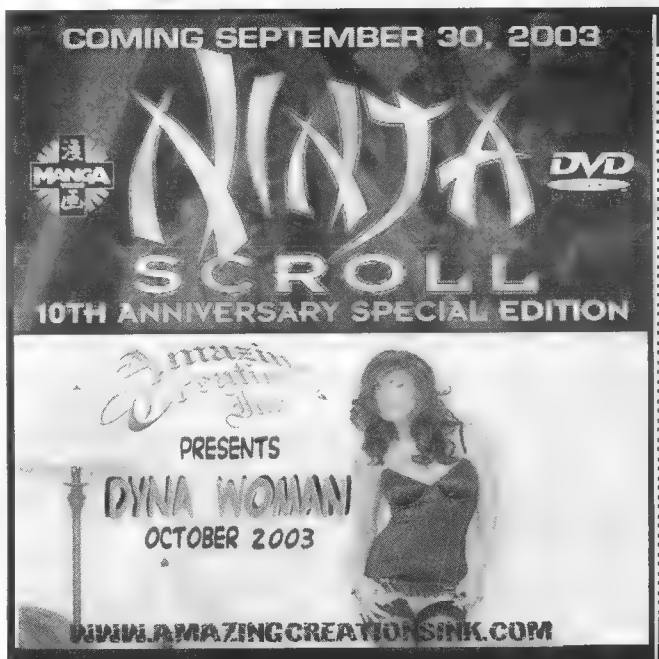

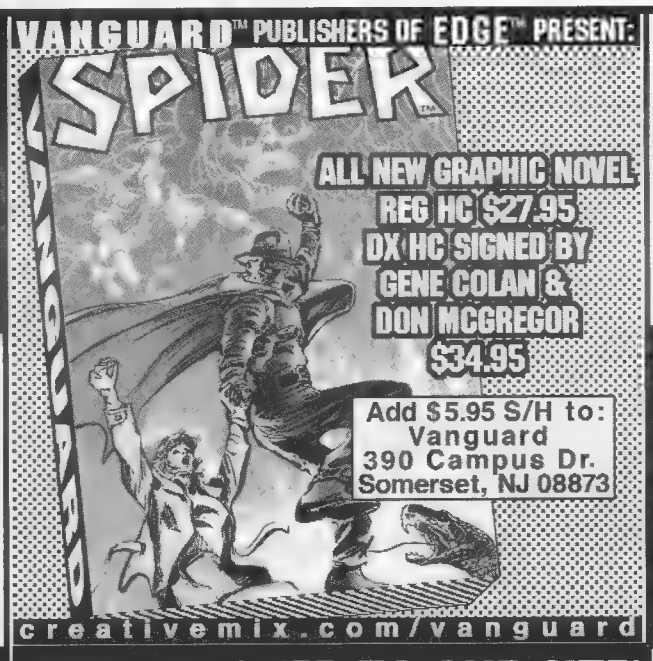

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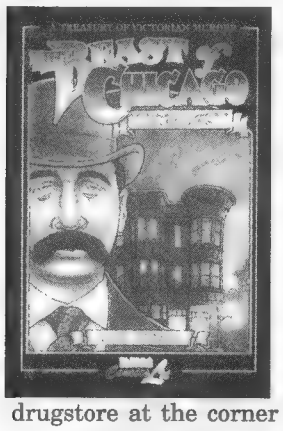
A graphic novel for Halloween

'Tis the season, bereft of reason, fraught with gore

By **R.C. Harvey**

We love to shudder in vicarious fear at the sort of hideously appealing fake horror Hollywood cooks up for us from time to time. And today, as October winds its way to its perennial horrifying conclusion, we can find the authentic article between the covers of a good graphic novel — and just in time to celebrate with ghouls and witches on All Hallows Eve.



The book in at hand is *The Beast of Chicago* (80 6x9-inch hardcover pages in black and white, $15.95), the sixth in the NBM *Treasury of Victorian Murder* series of graphic novels all written, drawn, and exhaustively researched by Rick Geary. "The Beast" is a man who went by the name of H.H. Holmes (among many aliases). He came to Chicago in the summer of 1886 and found work in an Englewood drugstore at the corner of 63rd and Wallace Streets. He eventually took over the business and, in the years running up to Chicago's celebrated Columbian Exposition of 1893, he built a hotel across the street from the drugstore and moved the business and himself into it.

The hotel took in permanent residents as well as transients, and Holmes conducted a flourishing business from the drugstore, selling a variety of snake oil elixirs and soon — ominously — a line of articulated human skeletons, extracted, everyone supposed, from presumably nameless corpses otherwise destined for Potter's Field burial.

And, when the Exposition opened, the hotel catered to the tourists who arrived in droves in The Windy City to visit it: mostly female tourists, mostly unmarried. Many of those (if not most) who stayed at Holmes' hotel were never seen again after checking into the facility.

Years later, after Holmes' apprehension and execution, the building was inspected and found to be a maze of narrow passageways and a warren of strange rooms, many of an air-tight construction into which gas jets expelled their poison. In the basement, investigators found a huge furnace (large enough to cremate a human body) and a stained dissecting table (large enough to accommodate a human form) with all the accouterments for dismembering cadavers.

Holmes eventually admitted to killing 27 persons, but many of those who have subsequently written about him have put the number at 50 or 100, even 200. (And Holmes' testimony, Geary tells us, was, itself, suspect: Many of the 27 persons whom he named as his victims were discovered to be still alive.) Holmes was also a con man of exceptional skill and an accomplished bigamist, having married three different women, all of whom were shocked when they were told, after his arrest, of their husband's familial enterprise. Since he could scarcely have built the hotel with money earned in the drugstore, it is supposed he borrowed most of it, supplying fraudulent collateral (or, alternatively, cashing in the insurance he'd taken out on his victims).

Holmes was hanged in the spring of 1895; his hotel burned to the ground in August of that year. (The Englewood Post Office now occupies the site.) "The castle," as local residents called it, had been boarded shut for two years by then, but it had opened in 1890 and had served Holmes' nefarious purposes for at least three years.

"Holmes is generally thought to be America's first serial killer," Geary writes. "Rather, he was the first American to be caught and convicted for having committed multiple murders over a period of time. Surely," he continues, "others went before him whose crimes remain, as yet, unrecognized."

Geary begins the book by quoting Holmes, who, while in prison awaiting trial and, then, execution, wrote a spurious autobiography: "I couldn't help the fact that I was a murderer, no more than a poet can help the inspiration to sing."

This tome, as are all of Geary's previous works in this series, is meticulously researched and rendered in an as authentic a way as possible. The buildings, the streets with their occasional litter, the costumes of his populace — all are drawn in painstaking detail in Geary's distinctive style, which partakes somewhat of the linear mannerisms of art nouveau, outlining fine-line renderings with a defining bold line (think of Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo* pages). Geary adds a fustian patina by nicking his lines with a progression of dart-like notchings that soften the edges and mold the shapes, just as feathering, in another drawing style, does. Tonal variety is achieved through the painstaking application of parallel lines that turn white expanses into shades of gray. These graphic maneuvers give the visual proceedings an antique air perfectly suited to the ambiance of Geary's subject, Victorian-age bloodthirstiness.

Geary's storytelling style in these productions adds to the general aura of foreboding in which his stories are lovingly shrouded. In telling his tale, he deploys word and picture in much the fashion of a Ken Burns' historical documentary. Sometimes, the pictures show a street scene or a building where the action has taken place. The verbiage drones on, unemotional and matter-of-fact, relating the circumstances.

But the pictures usually lend this spare recitation a sinister quality, often by contrasting to the prose a parade of images that hint at things otherwise unspoken. On one page, we meet the man Holmes hired to strip corpses of their flesh by way of preparing skeletons "for scientific study." A vertical panel on the left shows a skeleton at full length. A stack of panels on the right shows us, top to bottom, the assistant, Mr. Chappell (a man who is looking, furtively, off-camera to the right), a box with a wrapped corpse in it, and then a caption: "Holmes would explain that the corpse was that of a recently deceased patient or the unidentified remains from the city morgue." Below this caption is a picture of a handshake. And below that, more caption: "Mr. Chappell asked no questions." Suddenly, the ostensibly friendly handshake depicted acquires the air of a conspiracy.

On another page, reviewing the relationship between Holmes and one of his numerous mistresses, Julia Connor, who became pregnant by Holmes, the caption, "It is known that, after December 1891, Julia Connor and her daughter Pearl were not seen or heard from again." Below the caption, Geary gives us a drawing that depicts a framed photograph of Holmes, Julia, and Pearl in the typical Victorian familial pose, father behind seated spouse and offspring; the framed photo has fallen to the floor and sits on its side, the glass broken, shards on the floor at its side. Geary's visual here underscores the callous disregard for human life that lay under Holmes' charming veneer.

Each new arrival in the book's cast is depicted face-front in the manner of a family photo album — each smiling sweetly. Unsuspectingly. Geary also supplies maps of the city, showing where Englewood is in relation to the Columbia Exposition, and diagrams of the castle of horrors itself, all of which enhances the rhetoric of authenticity that obtains throughout the book.

Despite the grisly nature of his subject, Geary supplies no explicit pictures of the ghoulish enterprises of Holmes: no blood, no gore, no disembodied intestines. All is discrete, restrained. And the very restraint serves the narrative by imparting to it another layer of sinister menace.

Geary lists his sources on the opening pages of the book, but he omits the most recent on the subject (because it hadn't been published when he was delving about for information): *The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson. Just in case you want to pursue this ghastly material in greater detail (464 pages' worth).

Or you could pick up any or all of Geary's other titles in NBM's series: *A Treasury of Victorian Murder* ("three delectable murders"), *Jack the Ripper* (a recitation based solely on the known facts in the case without resort to speculation about who The Ripper may have been), *The Borden Tragedy* (the officially unsolved mystery attributed here to Lizzie Borden's handiwork, axing her mother to death with "40 whacks" and her father with "41"), *The Fatal Bullet* (the assassination of U.S. President Garfield), and *The Mystery of Mary Rogers* (a New York cigar store clerk whose body was found floating in the Hudson River on the Jersey side). All are on view at *www.nbm.publishing.com*. ✦

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37 FN+ 40
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9 VG-F 110
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Heckle And Jeckle
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2 GD+ 50
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90 FN-VFN.....75
92 FN..... 50
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Jet Powers
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Jimmy Wakely
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7 VFN 86
Jo-Jo, Congo King
11 FN+..... 400
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Journey Into Fear
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109 VG 40
110 VG 40
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Masked Bandit
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Meet Corliss Archer
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Monte Hale Western
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Mutt & Jeff
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Smash Comics
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109 VG+ 14
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Thrilling Romances
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Vic Torry And His Flying Saucer
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Victory Comics
4 VG 198
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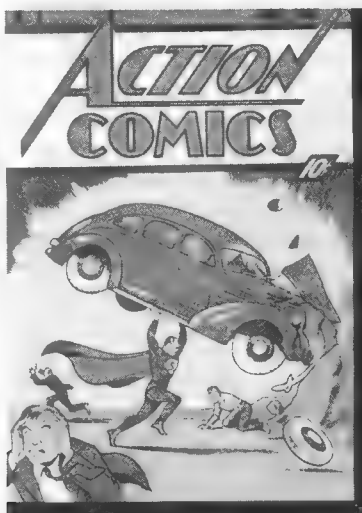
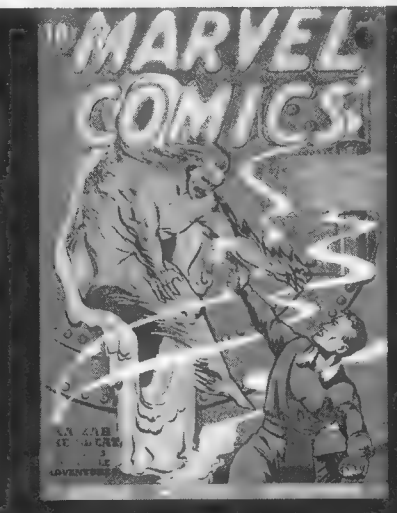
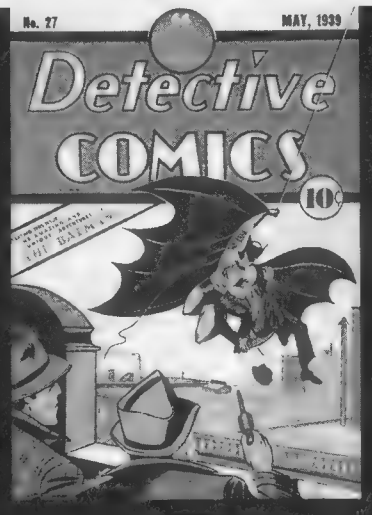
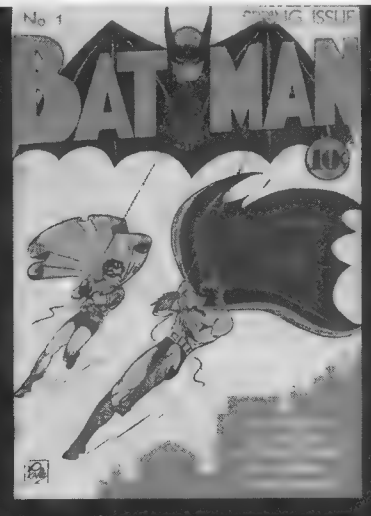
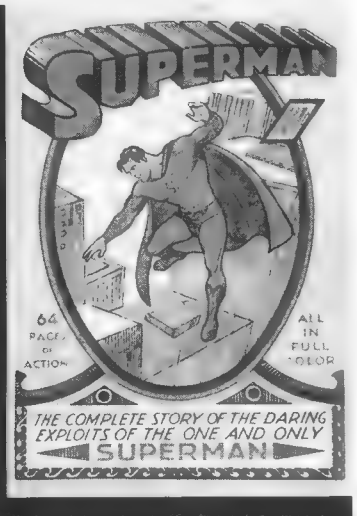
1 FN+..... 250











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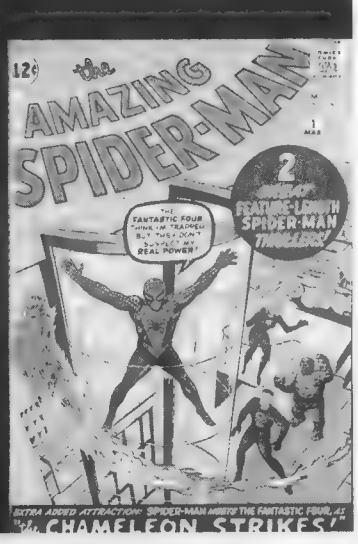

BACK ISSUES

CBG's weekly nostalgia celebration!

"At CBG, we recognize that the classic comics of yesteryear are why most of us got into comics in the first place. It's our mission to celebrate those comics by reminding you of great characters and stories, presenting insights into what creators had in mind, and searching out affordable reprints!"

A new acronym: EYKIW

What's it mean?

Dear Captain, Page 34

The creators, characters, and series people are STILL talking about today!

FLASHBACK

15 years ago

Oct. 22-24, 1988, representatives from nine distributors belonging to the International Association for Direct Distribution met with representatives of publishers and retailers in the third annual conference for the group. IADD President **Ron Haar** termed it "a real success."

20 years ago

Jerry Scott took over as writer and artist on the comic strip *Nancy*, with his first work appearing the week of Oct. 10, 1983.

30 years ago

The Comic-Book Book, edited by **Don Thompson** and **Dick Lupoff**, the sequel to their previous volume *All in Color for a Dime*, was published by Arlington House in the fall of 1973.

35 years ago

Artist-writer **Joe Simon** and Editor **Joe Orlando** gave the world *Brother Power, the Geek* #1 (Oct 68).

55 years ago

What villain was introduced in DC's *Detective Comics* #140 (Oct 48)? Why, that would be The Riddler.

60 years ago

Pulitzer Prize-winner **Mike Peters** was born Oct. 9, 1943. The editorial cartoonist also created *Mother Goose and Grimm* and presided over a PBS series on cartooning.

Uncle Marvel first appeared in *Wow Comics* #18 (Oct 43).

CBG ONLINE!

Subscribers! *Read the latest issue of **CBG** online every Thursday! Visit **www.collect.com/issues.asp** to log in and follow the instructions on the site.*

Devoted to helping pros with problems

A Commitment to Our Roots draws support, dispenses services

By **Nathan Melby**

The non-profit A Commitment to Our Roots (ACTOR) has been around for more than three years, helping former and current comics creators. To do so, of course, the organization has to raise money, and several efforts to do so are in the planning stages.

The next scheduled fundraiser will be held in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of Geoffrey's Comics in Gardena, Calif., on Nov. 15. "It is pretty remarkable to think that there is a comic-book store that has been in continuous operation for 25 years," ACTOR President Jim McLaughlin told ***CBG***. "They are a first-class organization and on Free Comic Book Days in the past they had easily thousands of people out there. They really know how to drum up a crowd.

"They are bringing in a lot of creators for signings and doing a lot of events to celebrate. For that day, they are donating 25% of all proceeds to ACTOR, which will be very nice."

Jim McLaughlin says more plans are in the works for 2004.

Wizard World: ACTOR also plans to have a booth at Wizard World Texas Oct. 22-24, and McLaughlin said JG Jones (who draws Mark Millar's *Wanted* for Top Cow Productions) will be at the convention on behalf of ACTOR and will provide sketches and sign autographs at the booth for donations to benefit the charity.

MegaCon: The next big project for ACTOR will be at the 2004 MegaCon, held in Orlando March 5-7.

McLaughlin said, "Every year we have done a major art auction. In years past, we have had anywhere from 100 to 200 pieces donated, and, as a total, the auctions have done from $40,000 to $70,000. That will be a huge thing for us."

Variant covers: ACTOR has experimented with producing variant comic-book covers.

"We have actually commissioned a cover artist and have struck a deal with publishers to create a cover that will be sold with the proceeds benefiting ACTOR. We did one recently Image's new *Violent Messiahs: Lamenting Pain* series with Michael Turner and Peter Stiegerwald doing the variant cover and we just did one on *Magdalena* #1 from Top Cow," Mclaughlin said. "It is a really nice product and a way for us to pocket a few nickels at the same time."

He indicated the organization would plan more such projects in the future.

Until now: McLaughlin said that ACTOR has done very well in helping needy comics creators but stressed that creators should not be embarrassed to come to the organization for help.

"Since the organization's inception about three years ago, we've been able to help out at least 15 former comics creators with cumulative funds of well over $60,000," McLaughlin said. "In some cases, funds have gone for things as simple as helping someone pay the rent or pay the electric bill so his power doesn't get turned off; in some cases, it has been literally paying for operations and critical medical procedures to either save the creator's life or improving his quality of life.

"Lately, we have also been able to help some people just by giving them interest-free loans. Some creators have come to us and said, 'I am hitting a tough spot. I really see a light at the end of the tunnel; I don't want to be a burden to anybody, but, if you could just float me some money to get me through, that would be very helpful.' "

But McLaughlin said that he thinks that it is hard for some creators to swallow their pride and approach ACTOR for help.

"If there is one message to try to get out," he said, "it's 'Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall' — and it shouldn't have to be like that. I am not in the business of telling anybody how to feel, but, if I could encourage anybody, I would tell him or her *not* to feel ashamed and *not* to be afraid to come forward.

"We are an organization *created* to help former comics creators in times of need. It is there; you might as well take advantage of it."

More information on ACTOR is available at *www.actorcomicfund.org*. ✦

INSIDE THIS SECTION

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It was only comic books, but he liked it

Writer Steve Englehart on redefining Batman and other characters

CATCHING UP WITH
Steve Englehart

By **Tim Lasiuta**

Steve Englehart is more than a comic-book writer. He is more than the man behind the Hugo Strange-Silver St. Cloud Batman stories. He is more than the man behind The West Coast Avengers. He is a man who says he deeply cares about his craft and has never been ashamed to say, "They're only comic books, but I like them."

"I read comics as a kid, then I outgrew them" he told ***CBG***. "They just didn't hold my attention any more, so I gave up on them. When I was in college in my freshmen year outside Connecticut, a guy came up to me with a Spider-Man comic book and told me, 'You've got to read this; this is great.'

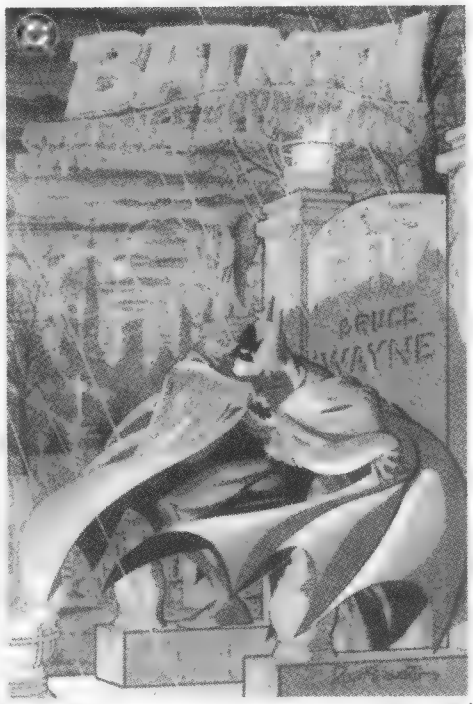
"I read it, and it really *was* great. It was a Ditko *Spider-Man*. That got me back into comics, not just specifically Marvel. Then, one day I got the guts to go up to DC's offices and say, 'I'm just a fan; can I talk to somebody?'

"They said, 'Julie Schwarz will see you.' So I talked to Julie for a bit. I learned that people doing comics were cool and not gods. When I decided that I wanted to do that, I realized that I could, and it was a matter of applying myself.

"When I went to work in the Marvel bullpen, I took Gary Fredrich's slot. He and his wife had gone back to Missouri for six weeks during the summer of 1971. At the end of the six weeks, he decided to stay and I held onto the job. There was a six-page monster story that somebody else had plotted that he was going to dialogue. Gary didn't want to do it, so they gave it to me. So I wrote it, and called it 'Terror of the Pterodactyl.' I liked doing it, and they liked the way I did it. So they offered me The Beast as an ongoing series. People liked what I wrote, so I became a comic-book writer."

Over the course of his career, Steve has worked at Marvel, DC, Atari, and Eclipse. His writing résumé features *The Avengers, Batman, Captain America, Daredevil, Doctor Strange, The Hulk, The Fantastic Four, Green Lantern, The Justice League, Luke Cage, The Silver Surfer, Thor, The Master of Kung Fu, The Beast, Scorpio Rose*, and others too numerous to mention. He has also served as an editor at Marvel — and even as an artist!

The classic comic-book run in *Detective Comics* #469-476 for DC stand out as an example of Englehart at his peak. Wooed by DC to revamp The Justice League at that time, Englehart said he wanted to do Batman, as well. Walt Simonson and Al Milgrom drew the first two issues, but frequent collaborators Marshall Rogers and Terry Austin rounded out the hallmark series, establishing a new art standard for The Dark Knight.



"The Joker, The Penguin, Hugo Strange, and Silver St. Cloud helped reestablish *The Batman* as a hero at his best at 3 a.m. under a full moon," Englehart said. "It was my shot to do this character that I had loved. I really think Batman is the archetypal comic-book character. Batman, to me, is the only character that, if you did him in black and white, he'd still be cool. I saw Batman as a complex character who needed to return to his roots, and that's what we accomplished in eight short issues. I think it's a great incarnation of what a comic book is."

Englehart's comic-book-writing career has been on hold for some time. "I think I am officially retired from comics," he said. "There really isn't that much work to do in comics, the industry is so small. The last thing I did for Marvel was *Thanos: Celestial Quest*. It got good reviews, but, when it was over, there was no interest in continuing to do anything. I have written novels, movie and animation screenplays, and videogames. I did some work on *Team Atlantis* for Disney, I have worked on *Batman* (the good movie), *Nightman, Droids, G.I. Joe*, and I just got a call about another animation series. I am quick to add that I am not a Hollywood guy. I am just fortunate to be able to work there. Until I get the check in my hand, no project is ever final.

"If I didn't think writing was fun, why would I sit alone in my room and do it? In the final analysis, it's only comic books, but I like it. I've enjoyed entertaining people. Even now, I'm not ashamed to say that I wrote comic books." ✦

IN BRIEF...

Oni to release *Marquis* collection

A series of short tales form *The Marquis: Intermezzo*, the second collection of Guy Davis' work, scheduled for December release.

Referring to Davis' first story arc with the character, Oni Press Editor James Lucas Jones said, "After the truly epic tale of *Danse Macabre*, it was understandable that Guy would want to spend some time on some smaller adventures of The Marquis."

In his series of tales, Davis has developed the story of a world in which the Ministry of Inquisition rules Venisalle, and his title character, Vol de Galle, can see into souls of the damned and fight the demons they hold. He protects a city where demons run rampant and a corrupt marriage between church and state keeps all but the most powerful of the city under its thumb. Jones said, "The world he's created, part 18th century France, part Davis gray matter, holds many possibilities and many stories. Not all of them will be as grand or as involved as *Danse Macabre*, but that doesn't mean they aren't worth telling."

The *Marquis Vol. 2: Intermezzo*, a 120-page $11.95 trade paperback, will feature a bonus section with Davis' design sketches, notes, and development material.

Davis said, "'Hell's Courtesan' and 'Sin of One' pit our protagonist against specific demons with unique powers for evil. How Vol de Galle deals with these conflicts gives insight both into his character and into the larger drama playing out across the *Marquis* saga."

BIRTHDAYS and INDUSTRY EVENTS

Mon 20 OCT

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Born on this date:
Sid Jacobson
Frank Herbert (1920)
Jim Engel (1956)
Len Kaminski (1962)
Paul Fricke (1963) – **40** years ago

Tue 21 OCT

Born on this date:
Pat Bastienne
Tom Morgan
John Dennis (1950)
Paul Levitz (1956)
Jeff Albrecht (1957)
Bob Keenan (1957)
Michael Dooney (1959)
Stuart Kerr (1960)

Wed 22 OCT

Born on this date:
Steven Grant (1953) — **50** years ago
John Tighe (1962)

New Comics Day! Scheduled to ship:

Dark Horse: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* #62, *Crush* #1

DC: *Atom Archives* Vol. 2, *Batman* #620, *Birds of Prey* #60, *Outsiders* #5, *Superman* #198, *Wonder Woman* #197

Image: *G.I. Joe Transformers* #5, *Savage Dragon* #112

Marvel: *Amazing Spider-Man* #500, *Fantastic Four* #505, *Punisher* #34, *Sentinel* #8, *Weapon X* #15

Thu 23 OCT

Born on this date:
Russel Harvey
Eric Shanower (1963) – **40** years ago

Fri 24 OCT

United Nations Day

Born on this date:
Paul Laikin
Bob Kane (1916)
Al Feldstein (1925)
Mindy Newell (1953) – **50** years ago
Laurel Fitch (1953) – **50** years ago
Mark H. Campos (1962)
Scott Alexander Frantz (1966)

Sat 25 OCT

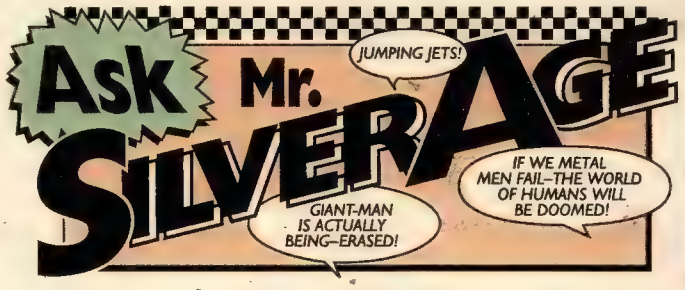
Born on this date:
Peter Ledger (1945)
Michelle Wrightson (1941)
June Brigman (1960)

Sun 26 OCT

Born on this date:
Larry Lieber (1931)
Steve Collins (1954)
Pierangelo Boog (1957)
John Morelli (1962)
Glynis Oliver (1949)

Melvin (THE NOT-SO-SCARY) Monster

John Stanley's creation struggled hilariously to cope in a world he never made



By **Craig Shutt**

Dear Mr. Silver Age,
I love all the scary Halloween monsters that come out at this time of year! Do you have a favorite monster?

Jack R.
Los Angeles

Mr. Silver Age says: No doubt about it, Jack, my favorite Silver Age monster is Dell's Melvin Monster. Granted, he's a lesser-known light in the world of monsters — and not to be confused with Marvel's Melvin *the* Monster, who was just a menacing little boy. In fact, *this* little boy, with his green skin, pointy ears (and head), and scary family, was just the opposite of that Melvin: He was easily the most likable inhabitant of Monsterville. But that was truly faint praise.

Melvin's adventures were written and drawn by John Stanley, whose genius I've touted before (most recently in ***CBG*** #1552 for his *Nancy and Sluggo Summer Camp* extravaganzas). Melvin's short-lived comics career began with *Melvin Monster* #1 (Apr-Jun 65) and continued for only 10 issues (with the last one reprinting the first one). It's a series well worth tracking down, because I can't imagine it'll be reprinted any time soon.

Melvin lived in Monsterville with his father, "Baddy," a tall, ugly, purple galoot, and his mother, "Mummy," who was wrapped head to toe, except for her short red hair and neat house dress. Melvin had a pet crocodile, Cleopatra, but he got along with her about as well as Captain Hook did with his own crocodile buddy.

Melvin's key problem was that, while he had the monstrous look of all the denizens of Monsterville — and some of them were pretty creepy looking — he actually was a well-behaved, respectful little boy. His main goals every day were to be kind to people and attend school.

That approach wasn't much appreciated in Monsterville, especially by his loudly exasperated Baddy and his somewhat quieter but still disappointed Mummy. And Melvin paid for his attitude routinely. But he never changed his outlook — and, in fact, sometimes was even oblivious to just how irritating he was to the monsters around him.

In addition to his loving (if skewed) family, Melvin had a number of other recurring supporting characters to keep his life interesting. The most helpful (which isn't saying much) was Damon the Demon, who popped up in the first issue to serve as Melvin's guardian demon and reappeared many times after that, usually with some screwy new twist.

Damon wasn't the most proficient guardian you could ask for and messed up more than he helped out. At one point, he got confused and thought he should be guarding a monster named Marvin (who turned out to need his help and didn't get it). In #5 (Oct 66), Damon popped in to scream at Melvin, causing him to jump into a sticker bush. Damon was pleased, because Melvin had almost tripped over a stone and, instead, he merely got cut, bruised, and dirty landing in the sticker bush.

"The girl next door" had an entirely different meaning for Melvin, as he tried (unsuccessfully) to avoid the escapades of Little Horror.

Another pain in Melvin's side was Little Horror, a little witchy girl all dressed in black, who first showed up in the last story in #2 (Jul-Sep 65). She lived up to her name, bedeviling Melvin at every turn. In that first story, she convinced Melvin to visit her playhouse, which she gleefully claimed was haunted. In fact, the moans she loved hearing were being made by Baddy, who had become lost in his cellar in the previous story and had to tunnel out. When you went into Melvin's cellar, you never knew where you'd come out.

In #4 (Jul 66), Little Horror received a new flying broom and coerced Melvin into going for a ride. He fell off but, fortunately, he held onto her little sports broom (a whisk broom by our standards) and ultimately caused grief for them both.

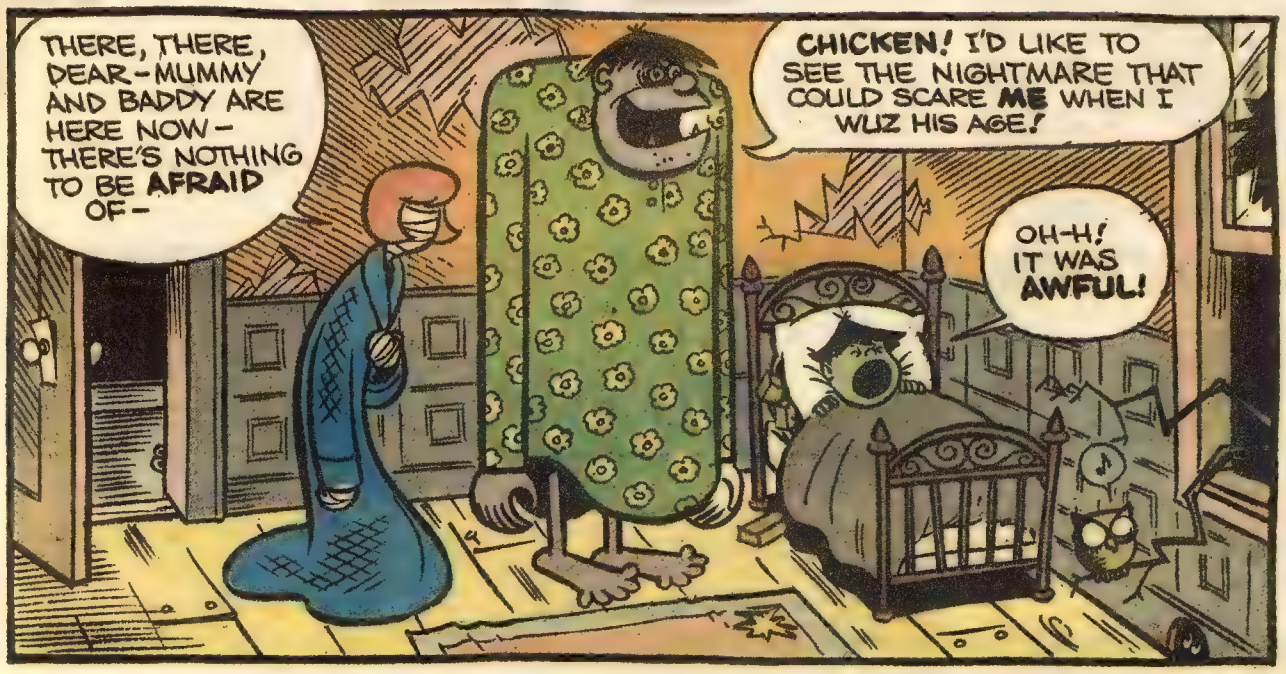
The final key player in Melvin's life was his grade-school teacher, Miss McGargoyle. As you would expect in the Bizarro-like world of Monsterville, Miss McGargoyle didn't really want to teach anyone anything, and most monster kids complied by staying away from Little Black Schoolhouse #13. But Melvin couldn't wait to enroll and he showed up bright-eyed and bushy-tailed every morning at her class, ready to go.

It was up to Miss McGargoyle to find new and more clever ways to discourage him, a tough chore, when he didn't even realize half the time that she was attempting to get rid of him. The attempts usually went awry, as so many things did around Melvin.

Melvin had less regular characters around him, including the hairy hand in the wall that helped him out by playing him in chess, answering the phone, and tickling him to wake him up. When finished, the hand always disappeared back into the paneling.

A few one-time visitors included Mr. Rosenose, a boarder Mummy took in for #5, who tried to eat Melvin until Mummy talked him out of it. (Melvin's pointy head would have caught in his throat.) Also in that issue, Melvin met Crazy Klutch, a bogeyman-like figure that Mummy and Baddy kept threatening Melvin with whenever he was bad (such as the times he cleaned up the living room). Much like Melvin, Crazy didn't live up to his monstrous reputation (or looks).

And in #6, Mummy's long-lost brother, Boddy, came to visit. He left Melvin a little uneasy, because Boddy was a big, hulking guy who, like Mummy, was swathed


THERE, THERE, DEAR–MUMMY AND BADDY ARE HERE NOW– THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF–
CHICKEN! I'D LIKE TO SEE THE NIGHTMARE THAT COULD SCARE ME WHEN I WUZ HIS AGE!
OH-H! IT WAS AWFUL!

Melvin Monster's nuclear family consisted of the sympathetic Mummy and the rough-edged Baddy — and pet crocodile Cleopatra.

Damon the Demon aided Melvin when he got into scrapes, but sometimes the cure was worse than the disease.

completely in wrappings. *Unlike* Mummy, though, he had no head. Well, at least, he didn't until Baddy, unnerved by a guy with no head, stuck Melvin into the head hole upside down.

Melvin's Monsterville was located near Humanbeanville, a place that fascinated Melvin. His visits began in the first issue, when his very first attempt to enroll in school resulted in a monstrous explosion that blew him to the land of human beans. (It also hugely pleased Baddy, who thought Melvin had finally done something monstrously good by blowing up the school).

That first encounter led to his capture by a rich eccentric for his private zoo. In an effort to make Melvin wilder, the owner put Melvin in continually smaller cages, until the cage was actually smaller than Melvin's body. But Melvin kind of liked the accommodations, even after the rich owner's granddaughter created a screaming distraction to free him. Melvin returned in the next issue, when a trip into his basement led him into a Humanbeanville subway tunnel, a far scarier sight than anything Monsterville could offer.

As with most stories by John Stanley, Melvin's adventures were a hilarious mix of verbal humor and slapstick. They included imaginative monsters and bizarre situations that could have been pretty scary except for Stanley's cartoon art and the wild escapades. (Stanley flexed his horror muscles in a few earlier comics. See the sidebar.)

The first couple issues featured short stories that led into the next one, creating one long continued tale with different themes, in the same way Stanley did some of his *Nancy & Sluggo* annuals. But in #3, the stories began their run as stand-alone features running two to six pages long (as well as half- or full-page jokes on inside covers or the last page).

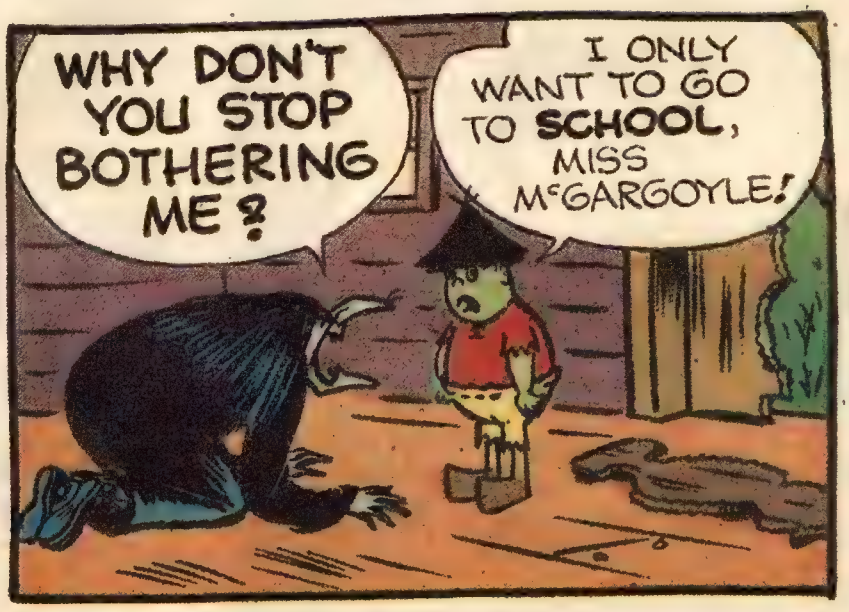
There was a good mix of lengths, including a couple each of six-, four- and two-page features, presented in varying positions from issue to issue. Anyone thinking it's impossible to write an entertaining story in such short lengths would do well to grab a couple of these issues to see how a master goes about his work.

The final (sob) new issue, #9 (May 67), for instance, began with a six-pager in which Melvin (and, ultimately, Baddy) battled a kite-eating cloud. It was followed by a four-pager (Miss McGargoyle tricked Melvin into allowing himself to be tied to a large rock and dropped into the Bottomless Pothole), a six-pager (Little Horror gave Melvin her mother's broken magic wand), a two-pager (Melvin fell off a cliff and sadly called on Damon the Demon for help), a six-pager (Miss McGargoyle tried to trick Melvin into leaving her alone), a four-pager (Cleopatra tried to eat Melvin in bed), and two two-pagers (Melvin met a prank-playing tree and took a scary walk in the woods).

In the final story, a one-pager, Melvin drank a chemical potion he'd concocted and turned into something *truly* horrific: a pleasant looking little humanbean boy. In fact, he bore an amazing resemblance to Billy, the next-door neighbor of Val in Stanley's concurrent *Thirteen (Going on Eighteen)*, one of my favorite humor series.

I like to think that Melvin, realizing he was trapped in a world he'd never made in Monsterville, a few years later drank the potion again, changed his name, and went to live with a family in a world that was a little better fit — Humanbeanville. It would certainly explain how Billy was able to put up with Val, Judy, Wilbur, and the other crazies in the world of *Thirteen*. They would have been a pleasant relief after trying to cope with Baddy, Mummy, Damon the Demon, and Little Horror. ✦

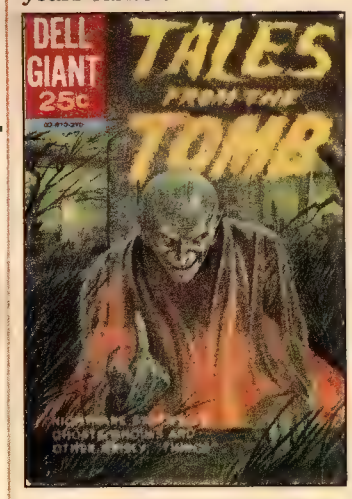
Ask Mr. Silver Age is © 2003 by Craig Shutt. Send all comments to ***craigshutt@ameritech.net****. And don't worry: The Krause book elves, even as you read this, are working feverishly on the final pages of* ***Baby Boomer Comics****, a collection of Mr. Silver Age's favorite early columns. So pre-order it now from Krause's ever-patient operators at (800) 258-0929, offer CBHCS.*



Melvin's relentless attempts to enroll at the Little Black Schoolhouse #13 nearly drove the teacher, Miss McGargoyle, sane.

Scary Stanley stories

Melvin Monster was imaginative and hilarious, but it wasn't really scary, because Stanley's scripts and art played the scenes for laughs. But Stanley was more than capable of writing stories that could scare the pants off little kids, as he'd proved a few years earlier.



Stanley wrote all of the stories in *Ghost Stories* #1 (Sep-Nov 62, reprinted almost entirely as #21) and *Tales from the Tomb* #1 (Oct 62), two creepy classics that scared the beejeebers out of some of today's comics pros when they read these Dell Giants back in The Silver Age.

Jeff Gelb was one of those, as he noted in his article for *The Stanley Steamer* fanzine #4 (Oct 82), reprinted in the *Little Lulu* hardcover Vol. 13. Noting that the stories were "guaranteed to give kids nightmares instead of laughs," he said of the issues, "There seemed to be something absolutely perverse in their power to wring every drop of horror out of each story." He also said, "Nothing which the E.C. writers attempted was any better than Stanley's two-issue horror output."

Scott Shaw!, proprietor of the Oddball Comics column at *www.comicbookresources.com*, agreed. He said that *Ghost Stories'* lead feature, "The Monster of Dread End," "has been acknowledged by several comic-book professionals as the single scariest comic-book story of all time." Shaw admitted he read the story as a college freshman, "and even then, I found it to be the single most disturbing comic-book story I'd ever read."

The 10-page story told of a neighborhood that was deserted after several children were stolen from their beds and cops were unable to catch the kidnapper. The neighborhood remained empty, until a boy obsessed with the killer learned the creepy truth about what stalked the streets after dark. (The recent *Greyshirt: Indigo Sunset* mini-series paid tribute to this story with one of its story elements, Shaw noted.)

The issue featured three more features, all written and laid out by Stanley. They told of a child-stealing spider-man, a girl with recurring horrific encounters with a mysterious door that appeared in her bedroom, and two kids who encountered a demonic black stallion. Yow!

Tales from the Tomb #1 featured similarly creepy stories, including a lead feature about a hitchhiker who stopped overnight at a rooming house, where the kindly proprietress let him stay for free. He discovered the true price when the hooked rug on the floor next to his bed proved to be a portal to somewhere else — and he was wanted. A dozen other tales, ranging between one and a lucky 13 pages long, created one heckuva horror collection. Check them out — if you dare.

Comic-book controversy long before Wertham

The red-hot thrill: The comic-book crisis of 1948, Part One

By **Steven E. Mitchell**

As 1948 opened, the comic-book industry was in a state of siege. The challenge handed the publishers by Sterling North in 1940 gradually acquired a focus. J. Edgar Hoover, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the president of the American Prison Association had pronounced comic books crime-inciting and harmful to the American way of life. The mayor of Chicago banned *Crime Does Not Pay* in that city, and the National Office for Decent Literature (NODL) continued to issue its lists of disapproved comic books.

In response to the mounting hysteria, 35 publishers combined to form the Association of Comics Magazine Publishers (ACMP) in May 1947 but immediately lapsed into silence and inaction.

The year 1940 had marked the first crisis for the infant comic-book industry. American adults suddenly discovered their children's new pastime, and those parents' indignant response ended the idyllic isolation of the four-color universes. North's accusations would never be laid to rest, though they lingered wanly through the war years.

On March 5, 1946, at Fulton, Mo., Winston Churchill formally recognized the Iron Curtain, and the United States plunged into paranoid introspection. Every institution, organization, and individual was subject to suspicion, and inquisition became the new American obsession. In the climate of fear that prevailed, it was not surprising that old charges against the comic book were revived. It would have been more surprising, if such a universal experience had been overlooked.

The second crisis year for the industry was 1948. An almost frantic need to combat the problem of juvenile delinquency fueled this more serious challenge to the very existence of the comic book. During World War II, as fathers went to war and many mothers entered the defense labor force, juvenile delinquency statistics soared, and the average age of youthful offenders plunged.

In 1946 and 1947, the number of juvenile arrests declined from the war years but remained higher than the prewar year of 1941, nostalgically regarded as an innocent ideal. Calmer observers attributed the still unacceptably high figures to an irreversible disruption of the home life of the family, as a sacrifice to elusive progress. Others sought a different reason.

For a time, the world of children's fantasies intruded on a nation's realities, and the country read the comic books.

"March 1948 must have been a nightmarish month for the publishers of comic books."

March 1948 must have been a nightmarish month for the publishers of comic books, as their newsprint baronies received an onslaught unequaled even in the earlier crusade against the comics supplement. On March 2, an ABC broadcast of *America's Town Meeting of the Air* discussed "What's Wrong with the Comics?" and touched off "a great and confusing national debate." John Mason Brown, drama critic for the *Saturday Review of Literature*, and Marya Mannes, journalist, spoke in opposition to comic strips and books. Al Capp, creator of *Li'l Abner*, and George J. Hecht, publisher of *Parents' Magazine* and *True Comics* and a member of the ACMP board of directors, constituted the defense.

In his opening remarks, Capp ridiculed the criticisms of comic-strip violence and sex and characterized the comics as a form of entertainment as legitimate as radio, movies, and books. In 1941, Hecht had expressed his personal desire that all comics, including his own, be put out of business, so his contribution may have been less than helpful.

The case against the comics, however, was accorded the widest circulation in reports on the broadcast. Mannes, selected in part because of her article in the Feb. 17, 1947, issue of *New Republic*, was a veteran foe of the comic book. In "Junior Has a Craving," she uniquely defined comic books as "the absence of thought."

On the ABC discussion, Mannes pointed to the poor technical quality of the comics and attacked their espousal of the triumph of right by force and violence. And worst, she complained, was their supplantation of fantasy, "which is the soul of a child."

Mannes' partner, John Mason Brown, provided a literate condemnation of the comics reminiscent of Sterling North's 1940 editorial. Brown was emphatic in his condemnation of all comics — strips and books — and, although he repeated many of the arguments offered eight years before by North, he delivered them with original vehemence.

In his opening attack, Brown condemned the quality of story and art, as well as the lack of subtleties and ethics, the substitution of "bad drawing for good description," reduction of "the wonders of language to crude monosyllables" and "their tiresome toughness, their cheap thrills, their imbecile laughter." He also deplored comics as a waste of time and as destructive of the ability and inclination to read.

While Brown admitted that he understated his hatred when he said he abhorred both good and bad comics, he conceded that they were useful "as knockout drops for unruly children, as sedatives and Maxim silencers."

Both comic strips and books presented the same lack of merit and barely concealed danger for the *SRL* drama critic. They were "the marijuana of the nursery; the bane of the bassinet; the horror of the house; the curse of the kids and a threat to the future." The ABC broadcast elicited a record response of 6,000 letters, mostly favorable to the critics of comic books.

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*Participants in the **America's Town Hall Meeting of the Air** discussion of comics posed for a group photograph. Left to right: John Mason Brown, Marya Cannes, George V. Denny Jr., Al Capp, and George J. Hecht.*

Despite the ringing vilification delivered by Brown, the substance of his attack was well worn and familiar. All conventional criticisms of grammar and art paled before the results of a two-year study of comic books conducted by Dr. Fredric Wertham, senior psychiatrist for the New York Department of Hospitals and director of the Lafargue Clinic, and a group of Lafargue psychiatrists and social workers.

On March 19,1948, in a symposium on "The Psychopathology of Comic Books" sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Psychotherapy, association president Wertham was the host at the first exhibition of comic books and related research compiled independently of the industry. About one-third of all comic-book titles then available were displayed.

During the symposium, Wertham introduced studies by Drs. Hilde L. Mosse, Paula Elkisch, and Marvin L. Blumberg and folklorist Gershon Legman. Mosse, a colleague at the Lafargue Clinic, denied the con-

tention of apologists that comic books represented modern fairy tales and folklore. Instead, she asserted, comic books taught children that the only solution to their problems was violence. According to Elkisch, the "primitivism" of comic-book conflicts and form appealed to children. The constant stimulation of these baser impulses subverted educational guidance, which strived to protect children from their primitive selves.

Blumberg extended the harmful influences of comic books to all children, even those "well adjusted children with adequate satisfaction and outlet for their emotions." Comic books, he continued, "are an ill wind, which blows good for the publishers. This unfortunately still proves to be a stronger argument than the welfare of the people." (Legman's contribution will be discussed later.)

Comic books had few defenders at the symposium. Harold Straubing, comics editor of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, expressed doubt that delinquency could be solely attributed to the influences of comic books, "because we are exposed to so much crime, violence, conflicting ideas, and social problems in life and other mediums of expression."

According to the published abstract of the symposium, Charles Biro, of Lev Gleason Publications' *Crime Does Not Pay*, "stated vigorously that comic books are getting better," while Harvey Kurtzman offered the suggestion that comic books "should be improved and made educational."

Although the symposium represented the combined researches of the Lafargue staff and associates, it more importantly served as an introduction to the spectacular conclusions announced by Wertham. His findings were also presented to the general public by journalist Judith Crist as "Horror in the Nursery" in the March 27 issue of *Collier's* and by Wertham in "The Comics ... Very Funny!" in the May 29 issue of *Saturday Review of Literature*. All three presentations affirmed that comic-book reading was "definitely and completely harmful."

Wertham charged that comic books undermined morals, glorified violence, and were "sexually aggressive in an abnormal way." The most sweeping indictment was his assertion that "comic book reading was a distinct influencing factor in the case of every single delinquent or disturbed child we studied."

While he did not contend that delinquency always resulted, he held that "constant perusal of pictures of vice, sadistic abuse and easy death ... [was] far more likely to lead to curiosity and imitation than to the release of aggressive impulses."

Comic-book reading harmed a child's ability to read, and children who could not read well were more apt to become delinquent than those who could. Comic books were also found to have been most voraciously read in low-income families where counter-influences to their excesses were less prevalent.

Unlike earlier critics, Wertham dismissed comic strips as harmless and the effects of radio programs and movies as transient. His charges were leveled exclusively at comic books. Their influences, he said he believed, were magnified because of children's tendency to hoard them.

Ironically, the responsibility for the ill effects of comic books was originally assigned to mental-health associations, child study and child care groups, and child welfare agencies. In the face of the growing menace of delinquency, Wertham accused, they continued to remain silent on the comic-book connection.

Wertham discounted the more obviously convenient foil, the publishers, as essentially blameless, because their sole concern was profit. However, he was especially critical of the paid advisors, who also served as the chief defenders of comic books.

He rejected the idea that comic books were modern fairy tales because of their realistic settings and preoccupation with modern crime and invention. It was a "fallacy," according to Wertham, to insist that children knew that comic books presented a world of make-believe.

"Wertham declared that educational, funny animal, and humor comics were as obsessed with violence as the worst crime comics ."

He also declared that the educational and funny animal and humor comics were as obsessed with violence as the worst crime comics.

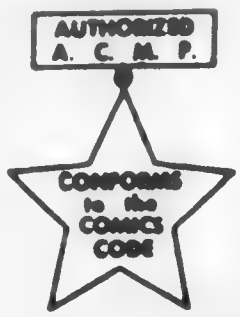
Wertham's original solution to the problem of comics steeped in violence and sex was the stricter enforcement of existing statutes, even at the risk of encroaching on freedom of speech and press. The concern was not with the freedom of adults, he contended, but with the "mental health of a generation."

(Wertham's initial enlistment in the comic-book crusade, therefore, was not from a hatred of comic books, but from his concern for children. As early as 1928, in the *Journal of Criminal Law*, he wrote: "... a child is like a flower; the vast majority of human beings will grow up ... healthy enough ... if all the social circumstances and surroundings are favorable. Let us not begin by dissecting and delving into the minds of children. Let us first correct and improve the circumstances under which they grow up.")

Although numerous critics had already debated the merits and effects of comic books for eight years, Wertham appropriated the crusade as his own. Wertham was the first psychiatrist to focus general public attention on crime and horror comics and for the next eight years he pressed his attack relentlessly.

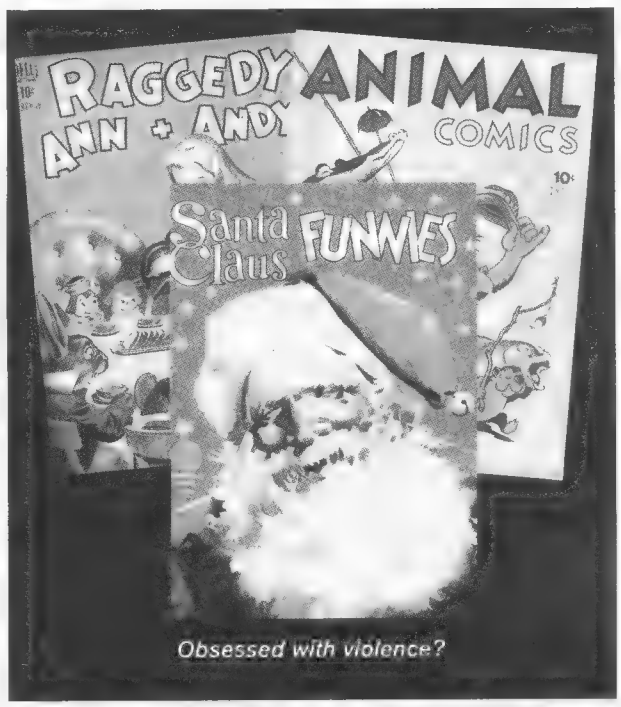
In 1955, the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency characterized his work as having had "far-reaching influence through alerting parents' and citizens' groups to the extent of bestiality and depravity being dispensed to children through such comics."

The subcommittee chairman during its investigation of comic books, Robert C. Hendrickson of New Jersey, praised Wertham as "the foremost antagonist of the comic book" (*Youth in Danger*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956) and further lauded him for his "invaluable contributions ... to public understanding of this subject."



The ACMP directly attributed the resurgence of criticism of comics from 1948 to Wertham, who "conducted a widely publicized and sensational crusade designed to rid the nation of the 'menace' of the comic book."

While Wertham acknowledged and adopted the aesthetic charge leveled by earlier critics, his enormous influence resulted from his more damaging argument that comic books were a contributing cause of juvenile delinquency. During the most hysterical phase of the crusade, from 1948 to 1955, he persistently repeated and elaborated the Lafargue findings in popular magazines, scholarly journals, and public forums; before local, state, and national investigating bodies; and, finally, in *Seduction of the Innocent* (Rinehart and Company, 1954). He held that the increase in the incidence and brutality of delinquency was largely due to the influence of what he labeled "crime comics."



Obsessed with violence?

By his definition, "*crime comics are comic books that depict crime*," not just the "blood in the title and blood on the cover" products of the postwar magazine circulation bust. He applied the label, not only to the deliberately realistic, pseudo-documentary imitations of Lev Gleason's *Crime Does Not Pay*, but to all comics, regardless of setting, which "deal with crime, murder, detailed descriptions of all kinds of felonies, torture, sadism, attempted rape, flagellation, and every imaginable kind of violence."

The depiction of racial stereotypes was also prevalent. Women in the crime comics were drawn suggestively, "in a smutty, unwholesome way with emphasis on half-bare and exaggerated sex characteristics."

He also identified a series of recurring "motifs" which pervaded crime comics, including injury to the eye, blood sucking, desecration of the dead, violence against the police, branding, stomping of victims, and tying up females.

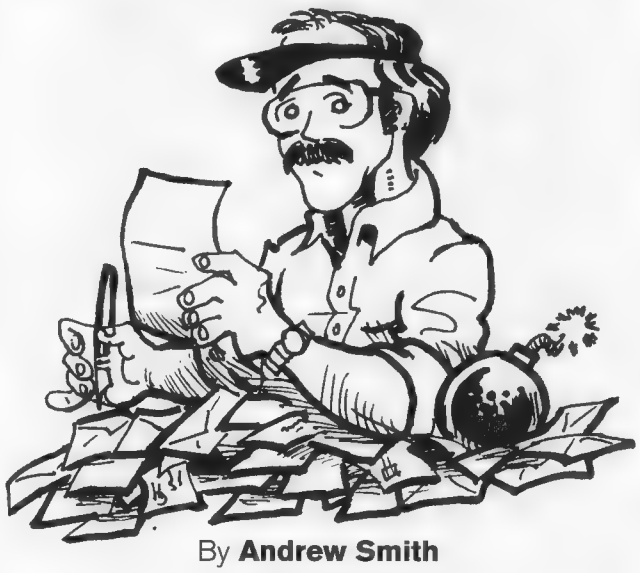
The Lafargue findings indicated that addiction to comic books temped children into crime. For those who read "a lot of comic books," Wertham revealed a comic-book syndrome: The child felt guilty about reading comic books and was made to feel so by others; he then read them in secret and lied about having read them; and, eventually, he used money that was intended to be used for something else, or stole money, to buy them. ✦

Next week: *In Part Two, Wertham's attacks on comics continue, including his most disturbing conclusions.*

A new acronym

Definitions abound on The Captain's message boards

Dear Captain ...



By **Andrew Smith**

In our continuing discussion of the comic-book form, I'd like to suggest a new term for an old concept: the EYKIW.

Coined by newspaperman **Clarkkent_DC** on my message board, it stands for "Everything You Know Is Wrong." An EYKIW is a story in which the writer informs the reader that everything we thought we knew about a long-established character has been misinterpreted — that something else was going on all along, and we just weren't looking at it correctly. It's often accompanied by the reader slapping his forehead and saying, "Of *course*! Why didn't I think of that?" And it often results in story possibilities opening up for the character.

To avoid veering all over the place in this discussion, and because I'm an incredible pedant, it's almost necessary to limit what is and isn't an EYKIW. Two other message-board regulars, **Commander Benson, USN**, and **Rich Lane** of **Titusville, Pa.**, through lengthy discussion, helpfully came up with the following definitions, which I paraphrase (and add to) thus:

• **EYKIW (Everything You Know Is Wrong):** This occurs when the perception of the history (or significant portions of the history) of a character is changed, usually in the form of a revelation. It is contained within the fictional conceit of the series; thus, the character is *aware* of the change and discovers that it overturns what he or she had previously accepted as "fact." The revelation doesn't usually change previous canon so much as re-interpret it, and it usually explains away genre conventions and continuity contradictions, makes a lot of sense, or broadens the character's story possibilities.

Example: *Swamp Thing discovers he isn't a man turned into a plant; he is a plant who thought he was a man.*

• **Mopee (with acknowledgements to Mr. Silver Age):** This is an EYKIW gone so horribly awry that everyone washes their collective hands of it. A Mopee story purports to alter a significant fact of a main character's established history *and* this change turns out to be so universally rejected and reviled by both the readership and the publisher that it is ignored without "correction" in the canon, never to be mentioned again.

Examples: *The Flash discovers that a heavenly helpmate, Mopee, was responsible for his super-speed (**Flash** #167, Feb 67). Superboy learns that Jor-El and Lara had survived Krypton's destruction in suspended animation (**Superboy** #158, Jul 69).*

• **Retcon (Retroactive Continuity):** This occurs when the writer goes back into a character's past and explains a heretofore-unexplained change or development or enriches the character's background *without* changing any of the previously established facts of the character. It's a continuity implant that fills in blanks but doesn't necessarily have any broader impact.

Example: *Roy Thomas's **All-Star Squadron** stories explained why the Golden Age Sandman changed from his business suit-gas mask outfit to the standard super-hero skin-tights and why Doctor Fate briefly sported a half-helmet in the Golden Age.*

• **Revision:** Similar to an EYKIW in that the history of a character is outright changed; however, it occurs *outside* the fictional conceit of the series. It is literally a re-vision; it establishes a new status quo for an established character wherein the character has no idea any change has occurred.

Example: *John Byrne rewrote Superman's life (**Man of Steel** #1-6, 1986).*

• **Revamp:** A character opts to change his current status quo (or a writer opts to do it for him or her) without necessarily negating the character's previous history.

Example: *Barbara Morse decides being a S.H.I.E.L.D. biologist isn't enough and adopts the super-heroine guise Huntress (later Mockingbird) in **Marvel Super Action** #1 (Jan 76).*

Scholars of the comic-book form — and isn't that all of us? — might see overlap among some of these terms, particularly Revamp and Revision. And it's clear that every Mopee starts as an EYKIW, but not every EYKIW becomes a Mopee.

All of this is subjective, of course, and I invite discussion on all of these terms from The Legion at large. After all, we have to have a common terminology if we're going to understand one another.

Besides, it's fun.

But let's leave that for another time. Today, we're discussing EYKIWs and what a wealth of material there is. EYKIWs can be done extremely well (which is when I pronounce the term, "IQ"), or they can be done very badly (which I pronounce, "Ick-you"). Some are so badly done they become Mopees, but some bad EYKIWs live on and on, as writers try to "explain" them, morphing and mutating and growing more grotesquely bloated until fans run screaming for the aspirin. (See: Wonder Girl, Hawkman, Power Girl.)

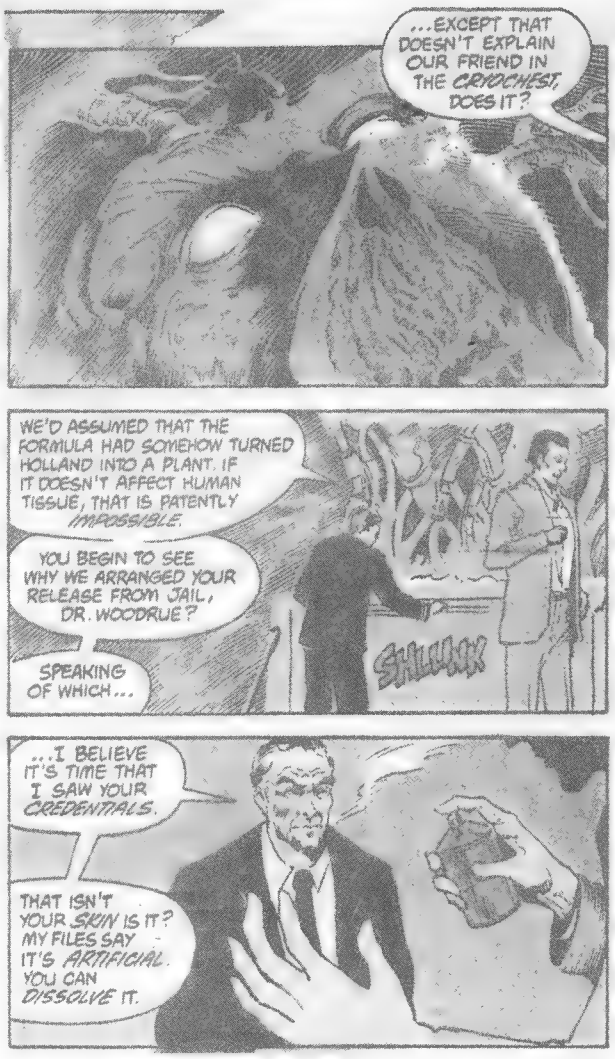
I plan to talk about that next week. This week, I'll suggest some of my favorite EYKIWs (***Spoilers Aplenty***):

• **"The Anatomy Lesson!":** Swamp Thing had been around in one form or another since *House of Secrets* #92 (Jul 71), but, despite sterling work by Len Wein, Tom Yeates, and Bernie Wrightson, had never really caught on.

Alan Moore turned that around with *Saga of the Swamp Thing* #21 (Feb 84). In a story too creepy for words, Moore established that Everything You Know Is Wrong — that Swampy *wasn't* a man turned into a

WHEW! THAT WAS SOME WRAP-UP!
SMALL WONDER YOU'VE FELT LIKE A DIFFERENT MAN SINCE YOU DUMPED THE HELMET OF NABU LAST YEAR, IN FAVOR OF THAT SAWED-OFF MODEL.
EVENTUALLY, JOHN, IT WAS EITHER ME OR IT--SO I VOTED IN FAVOR OF KENT NELSON, EVEN AT THE COST OF MOST OF MY MAGICAL POWERS.
FRANKLY, I DON'T CARE IF THEY NEVER--NOW WHAT?
WRAP

*Roy Thomas retold Doctor Fate's origin and made an oblique reference to his change from a full mask to a half-mask in **All-Star Squadron** #47 (Jul 85). While Mike Clark handled the first and last page of the story, a young Todd McFarlane was the penciller for the origin story itself.*


...EXCEPT THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN OUR FRIEND IN THE CRYOCHEST, DOES IT?
WE'D ASSUMED THAT THE FORMULA HAD SOMEHOW TURNED HOLLAND INTO A PLANT. IF IT DOESN'T AFFECT HUMAN TISSUE, THAT IS PATENTLY IMPOSSIBLE.
YOU BEGIN TO SEE WHY WE ARRANGED YOUR RELEASE FROM JAIL, DR. WOODRUE?
SPEAKING OF WHICH...
SHLUNK
...I BELIEVE IT'S TIME THAT I SAW YOUR CREDENTIALS.
THAT ISN'T YOUR SKIN IS IT? MY FILES SAY IT'S ARTIFICIAL. YOU CAN DISSOLVE IT.

Alan Moore's "The Anatomy Lesson" from* Saga of the Swamp Thing *#21 (Feb 84) made readers consider all that had gone before, without negating any of the earlier work by Len Wein, Tom Yeates, and Bernie Wrightson, among others.

plant; he was a plant who thought he'd been a man. This opened up a whole range of new story possibilities without changing a word of Swampy's history — in fact, re-reading older Swamp Thing stories with the new interpretation made them even more poignant, since we knew (and the title character didn't) how hopeless his search for a "cure" was.

And I slapped my head at how obvious it was in retrospect — but only Alan Moore saw it. As CK_DC said, "the gold standard for such tales."

• **"Flash of Two Worlds!":** DC engaged in a mild EYKIW with its revamped Scarlet Speedster in *Showcase* #4 (Oct 56). This new Flash was shown reading about the Golden Age Flash in comic books — a nod to older readers but establishing that Everything You Know Is Wrong about Jay Garrick. He was, and always had been, a comic-book character.

However, Golden Age fans would soon get more than that. In *Flash* #123 (Sep 61), Editor Julius Schwartz and writer Gardner Fox established that all of the Golden Age stories *had* happened, but on a parallel world — Earth-2. And an Earth-1 comic-book writer (presumably Fox's counterpart) saw those events in dreams and wrote them up as comic-book stories.

This wrapped up all contradictions in a pretty pink bow, while it opened the door for The Justice Society and other Earth-2 stories. It suggested an explanation for the goofier aspects of the Golden Age (Fox's dreams were imperfect and were turned into funnybook stories, anyway) and showed where The JSA had been all this time. Like all good EYKIWs, it broadened the original concept (without damaging it), explained everything plausibly, and provided launch points for new stories.

• **"Whatever Happened to The Man of Tomorrow?":** *Action Comics* #583 (Sep 86) doesn't really count, since it was an "Imaginary Story." But it was in the spirit of EYKIW, and I just loved it when Mr. Mxyzptlk revealed his "true" nature as Superman's deadliest foe (who'd only been play-acting for years), making me slap my forehead and say, "Of *course*! Why didn't I think of that?"

It was all brought home by Mxy's classic line: "Did you honestly believe a fifth-dimensional sorcerer would resemble a funny little man in a derby hat?" Y'know, when you put it like that ...

• **"... And What Time Hath Put Asunder!":** *Giant-Size Avengers* #3 (Feb 75) established that The Vision wasn't just any old freewill android ... he was the *first* freewill android, Phineas Horton's Human Torch, re-built by Ultron.

This was a satisfying head-slapper on a number of levels. It gave depth, legacy, and historical weight to The Vision. It suggested personality traits he'd never had before. It opened story possibilities heretofore undreamed. It drew a straight line from Timely's All-Winners Squad to Marvel's Avengers. And it was an epiphany — it just felt so *right* that I loved it instantly and wondered why nobody had thought of it before. Pure EYKIW gold.

One more thing: By making the Human Torch and The Vision the same android reduced the number of times that somebody had succeeded in creating a freewill android (and suggested that Ultron couldn't do it at all). And I appreciate that.

I think such outré and powerful concepts as independent robots ought to be strictly limited. If every Hank, Ultron, and Phineas can create one, the Marvel universe ought to be tripping over them left and right — especially super-teams, who'd constantly be fighting manufactured foes who were *more* powerful than The Vision and Jim Hammond. And it kicks open the door to *Magnus: Robot Fighter*, since freewill robots would almost certainly be busy building more of themselves. But by making Vizh and the original Torch the *same* android suggests the reverse: that making them is hard, that it's more luck than planning, and that, when you *do* create one, nothing goes the way you think it's going to go. There are only a few, you see, and for good reason.

This one almost doesn't count, because a later EYKIW undid everything, separating the two androids again. Nevertheless, it was brilliant the first time around.

• **"Please Allow Me to Introduce Myself!":** When Quicksilver and The Scarlet Witch were revealed to be the children of Bob "The Whizzer" Frank and Madelyne "Miss America" Frank, I yawned. When that was ditched in favor of the pair being the children of the gypsy Django Maximoff, I completely dozed off.

When they were revealed to be the children of Magneto in *Vision and Scarlet Witch* #4 (Vol. 1, Feb 83), I awoke to the sound of my hand hitting my forehead. "Of *course*!" I thought. "Why didn't I think of that myself?"

For me, it was an Everything You Know Is Wrong moment — because it was also right, if I just interpreted it correctly. The Maximoffs and Franks *were* involved in Wanda and Pietro's childhood, this story said, but were not their parents. Their true parentage had been obvious all along — and it fit like a glove:

We knew that Magneto had a human wife (Magda) who'd borne him children but ran off, as his powers and agenda became clear. (Where were those children?)

We knew Magneto had once saved Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch from an angry mob in Transia. (How is it they were all there at the same time?)

We knew that Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch felt an obligation to Magneto that they carried to extremes, and their unnatural fealty was questioned often in the comics — even by Wanda and Pietro themselves. (Why was it never answered in a satisfactory way?)

We knew that Magneto took a parental interest in Wanda and Pietro, treating them much better than the other members of The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. (Why were they the only people he was ever nice to?)

We know that both Magneto and Pietro have similar temperaments, similar politics — even similar hair. For heaven's sake, they even *look* alike!

This was a tremendously effective EYKIW. Weaving together threads from decades of funnybooks by dozens of hands, writer Bill Mantlo gave us a head-slapping moment that, in retrospect, we should have known all along. Nothing of value was invalidated, only viewed from a different perspective — and the view of the future it created was one of thousands of new plot possibilities.

Some on my message board took issue with this one. For one thing, they pointed out that the "I am your father" plot has become a cliché, given *Star Wars*. For another, they couldn't reconcile that Magneto could ever be married to a human woman, given his attitude.

But he *was* married to a human woman — that's canon and has been so for some time. And we know from numerous X-Men stories that Magneto didn't pop out of the womb a raving lunatic — it took years for him to develop his philosophy, and he even worked with Xavier in Israel for a time after World War II. He was, in his youth, a fairly decent guy.

Perhaps he was still wavering in his opinions when he met Magda. Perhaps he was giving Xavier's dream a chance. Perhaps he was just lonely and desperate for female companionship. Who knows? But we know he did it, we know he had children — and now we know what became of them.

Empire Strikes Back or no, this story had been writing itself since *X-Men* #4 (Mar 64), when the pair were introduced as part of The Brotherhood of Evil Mutants. It just took Mantlo to see it.

That's a smattering of EYKIWs I've liked, and now I want to hear yours. Hold off on the ones you *didn't* like — that's our topic for next week. ✦

Andrew Smith, who writes the ***Captain Comics*** *syndicated newspaper column, can be reached at* ***capncomics@aol.com*** *or on his message board,* ***www.captaincomics.us****.*

Happy 50th birthday, Richie Rich!

A slow starter, the poor little rich boy eventually had the biggest output

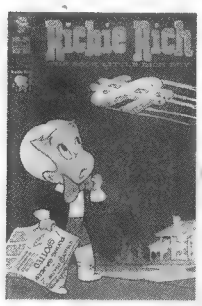
By **Mark Arnold**

Richie Rich, The Poor Little Rich Boy, made his debut as a backup feature in *Little Dot* #1 (Sep 53). Although Harvey artist Warren Kremer and Harvey Editor Sid Jacobson both claimed to have created the character of Richie Rich, Harvey Comics founder Alfred Harvey may have come up with a prototype, "Bobby Bright," as early as the 1930s. According to Harvey, "Bright" was eventually named Rich after his friend drummer Buddy Rich.

Kremer's take on the ongoing creation battle over Richie Rich was that he'd based Richie on *The Millionaire* and named the character after his son. Although *The Millionaire* TV show was first broadcast Jan. 19, 1955, the film *If I Had a Million* showed in movie theaters in 1932 and had the same premise, so he may have confused the two — perhaps leaving the origins of the character unresolved.

The character of Richie Rich was designed by longtime Famous/Paramount Animator Steve Muffatti, who originally drew Richie's Fauntleroy outfit of a large red bowtie, blue shorts, and black blazer after Alfred Harvey's original rough sketches. It was Muffatti and Harvey Writer Lars Bourne who were assigned Richie's first story, "The Dancing Lessons." The story has been reprinted numerous times, most notably in a slightly altered version for *3-D Dolly*. The team continued to write most of the stories from 1953 to 1960.

Richie regularly appeared with his friends, Freckles and Pee-Wee Friendly, his parents, Richard and Regina Rich, and his girlfriend, Gloria Glad. As in Archie Comics, the rival is named Reggie, but *this* Reggie is Richie's snobbish cousin, Reggie Van Dough. Other regulars, like Cadbury, the perfect butler, did not appear until the '60s — and others, later still.



Richie was slow to become a major Harvey star, since from 1953 to 1960, he only appeared as a backup feature in *Little Dot* and *Little Lotta* and in two starring issues of *Harvey Hits*. Richie also appeared as a backup feature during this time in *Little Max* and *Mutt and Jeff*, in an effort to boost sales of those flagging titles.

The stories at this time basically revolved around Richie's "abuse of wealth," with everything on the abundant Rich property suspiciously shaped like a dollar sign. As time went on, Richie's stories took a turn toward adventure, with some tales rivaling both Carl Barks' Uncle Scrooge and Hergé's Tintin.

Richie became a major Harvey star but did not have his own title until 1960. After that, Richie made up for lost time by adding many titles. At one point in the '70s, Richie was starring in 32 different titles every two months! It's possible that more issues and stories have been published about Richie Rich than about any other character in the history of comic books; in any case, he has more than 2,000 issues to his credit.

The adventure tales led to the ultimate team-up that began in 1974, when Harvey's two biggest breadwinners appeared together in the same comic book under the natural title of *Richie Rich and Casper*.

Richie Rich did not appear in animated form until Nov. 8, 1980, when Hanna-Barbera introduced *The Richie Rich Show*. In this series, the cartoons are fairly faithful to their comic-book counterparts, except that Richie, Reggie, and Gloria appear to be about 12 years old instead of 7 or 8, as in the comics. Also, a red sweater with an "R" and full-length slacks replaced Richie's trademark waistcoat and blue shorts.

Harvey ceased publishing most of its comic books in late 1982. Although the company published a few paperbacks from 1983 to 1985 (including a couple of *Richie Rich* books), regular publishing did not resume until 1986, this time by Alfred Harvey's son, Alan.

During the hiatus of the 1980s, there was talk of Marvel Comics licensing the Harvey characters for comic-book publication. That never happened — but, when Marvel did release its Star line aimed at younger readers in 1985, one of the new characters, Royal Roy, seemed to bear a close resemblance to Richie Rich.

Alan Harvey published until 1989, when he sold the company (minus Sad Sack and The Black Cat) to Jeffrey A. Montgomery, an entrepreneur who took over publishing in 1990.

In 1994, Macaulay Culkin starred in the live-action *Richie Rich* film. Though not a huge success at the box office, the film was fairly popular on home video. The movie also starred Jonathan Hyde and John Larroquette. A direct-to-video sequel with a different cast came out in 1998: *Richie Rich: A Christmas Wish*. A third movie, *Richie Rich's Summer Camp*, was scheduled but never completed.

The last Richie Rich comic book to date appeared at this time, when Marvel published *Richie Rich Movie Adaptation* in 1995. The other regular Richie titles had all ceased publication the year before.

Richie Rich starred in a new syndicated animated cartoon series that had its debut Sept. 21, 1996, and additionally featured classic Herman and Katnip and Little Audrey cartoons. This was a spin-off of *The Baby Huey Show*, which aired from 1994 to 1996.

Along with Casper, Richie Rich is Harvey's most memorable and enduring character, appearing most recently in *The Harvey Magazine* and with plans now afoot for a live-action TV series featuring a young-adult version of Richie.

Classic Media (licensors or owners of such characters as Mr. Magoo, Lassie, Little Lulu, The Lone Ranger, and Rudolph, to name a few) has handled the marketing of the Harvey characters since 2001. Harvey Entertainment, meanwhile, has renamed itself Sunland Entertainment.

A Yahoo! Group devoted to Richie Rich is called Richie Rich's Vault at *http://groups.yahoo.com/group/richierichsvault*. Hardcore fans can also read about Richie in the quarterly *Harveyville Fun Times!* available in print or online at *http://thft.home.att.net*.

Credit is due to the many artists who have drawn Richie Rich over the years: Steve Muffatti, Warren Kremer, Ernie Colon, Sid Couchey, Ken Selig, Dom Sileo, and Ben Brown. Writers have included Lars Bourne, Lennie Herman, Stan Kay, Ralph Newman, and Mike Curtis. ✦

Mark Arnold has been the editor and publisher of ***The Harveyville Fun Times!*** *since 1990.*

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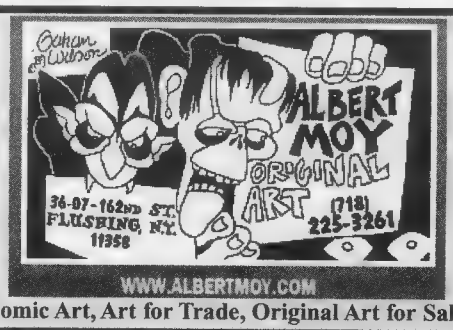

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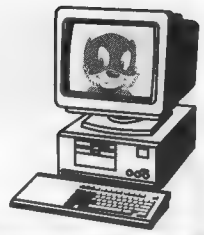
Letter of comment uncovered

Chuck Rozanski found the original letter to Marvel in his files!

Tales from the Database, Page 44



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$1,717

***More Fun* #27 (Lost Valley)**
in CGC 7.5 (VF-)
Only copy in grade; there are none better
$1,700

Want to subscribe to 9.8 comics?

New service introduces third-party graded subscriptions

By **Nathan Melby**

Steve Mortenson is offering a guaranteed CGC 9.8 grade on monthly issues of any ongoing series.

He told ***CBG***, "This is pretty much an outcome from my own experience. About six months ago, I began trimming down my own collection to the particular best books that I own, so I could preserve them.

"Through buying and selling on eBay, I have found that 9.8s are highly sought after, and — for people who like to collect complete sets and want to keep the set preserved in a great condition — this is a nice way to guarantee that the new *Fantastic Four* that comes out is in the condition they want it in."

Anyone who subscribes for a year to the service from Mortenson's Colossus Comics is guaranteed a 9.8 copy of each of the 12 issues paid for, plus a reading copy of the issue, so subscribers can continue to read their favorite titles, while adding a CGC graded-and-encased copy. CGC is Comics Guaranty LLC, the third-party-grading service that was introduced to the hobby in 2000.

"Through buying and selling on eBay, I have found that 9.8s are highly sought after."
— Steve Mortenson

CGC Primary Grader Steve Borock said, "Colossus Comics is a great way for collectors to acquire certified 9.8 new comics and to archive them in CGC's state-of-the-art tamper-evident holder. This is the only service I know of guaranteeing NM/M CGC grades on an ongoing subscription basis."

The cost for one year (12 issues) of a subscription is $396, but that can be paid in four installments of $99. The price includes all grading, shipping, insurance, and the cover price of the graded and reading copies.

Mortenson told ***CBG*** that he had decided to begin the subscription service after his experience sending in his comic books to be graded and being able to tell approximately what the grade would be.

"I have sent in about 2,000 books to CGC and I have gotten pretty good at picking out at least a 9.6 level and above.

"Basically I would probably submit about five books per issue, and I tell Steve to grade one 9.8, *if there is one*, out of those five," Mortenson said.

"I am pretty new starting out this subscription service, and I have about a dozen subscribers. I sent in 30 books this first time. Not all of the subscribers made it in the first submission, but, out of the 30, 24 were 9.8s and none received a 9.9 or 10.0. Of the 2,000 submissions that I have received on my personal comics, I have received two 10.0s and about five or six 9.9s. What I plan to do is, for the subscribers' books, if one of them grades *above* 9.8, it will go into a drawing, and whoever wins will get the book."

Mortenson said that the customer does not have to be subscribed to the higher-graded book to win the lottery. "If someone is subscribed to *Batman*, and one month a *Fantastic Four* comes back graded 9.9, he can still win the book," he told ***CBG***.

"I have had a lot of response. I have received more than 100 e-mails from people who are interested and would like to subscribe, and slowly things are starting to trickle in."

More information about the Santa Clara, Calif., company appears at *www.colossuscomics.com*. The number is (408) 260-9109. ✦

High grades at premium prices

Controversy has flared over third-party grading of comic books ever since Comics Guaranty LLC announced it would offer the service. Nevertheless, thanks in part to the reputation of its graders, the company has maintained a business that expanded almost beyond its staffers' ability to keep up with the volume. The firm is one of the Certified Collectibles Group of companies, consisting of Numismatic Guaranty Corporation of America (NGC), Sportscard Guaranty LLC (SGC), and now CGC.

As reported and pictured in ***CBG***, this summer, the firm began on-site grading at certain conventions; even prior to that, the firm provided a culling service to its clients. Retailers can provide CGC with long boxes of high-grade comics, which CGC then filters for anything at a specified grade and above.

Then, the dealer pays for encapsulation and final grading of those top-rated items. (It's one reason there are so many copies of 9.8 and above of *Origin* #1, recent copies submitted shortly after they shipped and became "hot.")

Collectors could submit comics themselves this way, but the goal of maintaining an ongoing, high-grade, encapsulated collection without the volume a retailer has at his disposal would be complex and time-consuming.

Many collectors have maintained a long-standing tradition of purchasing two copies of an issue, "one to read and one to put away." Mortenson's new subscription service formalizes that tradition, albeit with a greater investment than has been routine. Two dozen $3 comic books, after all, come to $72 without grading, shipping, insurance, or encasement. It remains to be seen how many collectors will pay $324 a year to have pristine copies without muss or fuss, but Mortenson is already fielding responses.

INSIDE THIS SECTION

● **Resale Report** .....40 | ● **Tales from the Database** by Chuck Rozanski.....44

There's art in them thar books!

By **George Hagenauer**

It's hard to escape original art when you visit my house. As you enter the front door, you face a long hallway lined with original pulp cover paintings, the only art my wife allows upstairs. Even the person with no prior knowledge of original art tends to get interested and follows the central stairwell, lined with comic-strip — and comic-book — art to the lower level, with more than a hundred other framed pieces of comic art.

If it's a collector visiting, I'll pull out the portfolios with the art that I collect but don't have the space to display. After flipping through the portfolios, they are often surprised, when I lead them into the library. For there, among hundreds of art books, lies art in books.

Artists personalizing a book with, not only an inscription, but also a drawing is a longtime tradition and one not limited to comics artists. Years ago, I sold my brother's autograph collection to an autograph collector whose collection included books autographed by fine artists like Claes Oldenberg that included sketches or small paintings beside their signatures.

It should not be surprising that drawings should accompany autographs in books by cartoonists. At the heart of many comic books and strips are characters that artists must master in order to tell a story. For many of these artists, drawing their characters is as simple as signing their signatures. I remember watching *Gasoline Alley* artist Dick Moores sign autographs at a Chicago Comicon in the 1980s. A group of us had paid Dick's way to the Con to honor him for years of donating beautiful little drawings to the convention's Art You Can Read auction, which benefited adult literacy programs.

"It should not be surprising that drawings should accompany autographs in books by cartoonists."

For any interested visitor stopping by his table, Dick would sign a small piece of paper or their book and draw a small headshot of the *Gasoline Alley* character Rufus. During a slow period, a friend of mine spent a long time talking with Dick about his career. While they talked, Dick absentmindedly doodled, and my friend became the proud owner of a piece of paper with about 50 Rufus heads!

At another Chicago Comicon, I traded a piece of panel cartoon art with Sergio Aragonés for about 10 *Groo* issues I had missed. As we talked, Sergio quickly signed them in the corner of the front page. When I returned to my table, I discovered that Sergio had done a sketch next to his signature of a different Groo character in each issue.

Probably the most incredible experience I had with a signing, though, was Frank Cho's visit to Westfield Comics. I went late with the hope of having some time to talk with Cho, since I knew many of his studio mates at Insight Studios. When I arrived, the line was out the store, down the hall, and onto the sidewalk. Hundreds of people had shown up. When I finally reached the front of the line, I was surprised (and pleased) to discover that Cho, not only had signed each of those hundreds of books, but also had done a monkey boy Cho drawing in it! As a person who probably will never be able to afford a Cho original, it was great to get a drawing from him. (Though wouldn't it be great, if he could do a Brandy sketch just as quickly?)

Sketches in books are a good way to collect art by many of the higher priced or scarcer artists.

For instance, Charles Addams signed and drew in many of his books during his lifetime. While an Addams original published cartoon (often available through the semi-annual Illustration House auctions) costs $5,000 and up, a sketch in a book will be a lot less. This is even more true of editorial cartoonists whose originals are often scarce, due to the large number archived in universities and, thus, off the market. I've searched years for a *Skippy* original with a soapbox racer or other motion study by Percy Crosby. While those are hard to find, it was not difficult to obtain a folio edition of his political drawings with a large detailed portrait of Skippy inscribed by Crosby.

One of the prizes in my collection is a Hergé Tin Tin and Milou drawing, one of six that came in on consignment from a friend. When he was a teen-ager, he'd lived for a year in France. He regularly visited comics artists and had a monthly lunch scheduled with Hergé (Georges Remi). Each lunch, he brought a different Tin Tin book, which Hergé graced with a similar sketch and signature. What's interesting is that many art collectors aren't aware of the art that lurks in many books waiting to be found — often at a fraction of the cost of a similar drawing on a separate piece of paper.

Signed books most often are found in lists by autograph dealers or specialist book dealers like Stu Ng. However, they also turn up in places like library benefit sales — and even at large chain used and discount bookstores. Both price books in great volume and often don't open the front fly, where most often the drawing and signature is. I own a Walt Kelly, and a friend owns a Matt Groening with a Bart Simpson sketch, both found at a chain bookstore at prices under half cover price! So, in developing your art collection don't ignore books — because often they can be a source of original art as well as published drawings by the artist. ✦

People with Percy Crosby Soapbox racer originals, questions, or comments can e-mail me at ***yellowkd@terracom.net*** *(no attached files, please — the anti-virus eats them, anyway) or by Postal Service to Box 930093, Verona, WI 53593. Art on this page is © 2003 Murphy Anderson and Moebius, respectively.*

POPEYE
WIMPY, WHERE'D THAT SWAB GO TO?
IF YOU MEAN MR. TOAR, HE REPAIRED TO HIS CABIN
WICH IS HIS CABIN?
I NEVER ASK PERSONAL QUESTIONS SO I DO NOT KNOW
MISSUS SEA-HAG, HOW DID THAT MONSKER GET ABOARD YER SHIP?
MY SISTER BROUGHT HIM ABOARD—HE BEAT UP MY CREW AND PUT THEM ASHORE—HE NEARLY KILLED THEM— MY SISTER HATES ME AND I HATE HER!
IT'S A LONG STORY—MANY CENTURIES AGO MY SISTER AND I FOUND AND DRANK FROM THE POOL OF YOUTH, AND WE'VE DRUNK FROM IT MANY TIMES SINCE—WE'LL NEVER DIE OF OLD AGE— HAH! I AM EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS OLD

EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS OLD!—WHY, HAGGY, YOU DON'T LOOK A DAY OVER SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY
I'VE ALWAYS HAD A DESIRE TO BE THE RICHEST WOMAN ON EARTH, SO I WANTED TO CASH IN ON THE POOL BY SELLING ITS WATER—BUT MY SISTER AND HER BRUTE WON'T LET ME— SHE CALLS HERSELF THE KEEPER OF THE POOL OF YOUTH
AND I AM THE KEEPER OF THE POOL OF YOUTH—
SO WHAT?

The two sketches on this page were made in Don and Maggie Thompson's copy of* All in Color for a Dime*, now used as a sketchbook.

RESALE REPORT

EYE ON eBay

Sept. 28-Oct. 4, 2003 CGC auctions

by **Darryl Buchanan**

This week, there was a rare auction for an *Action Comics* #1. This copy in (restored) 9.0 condition was the highest graded restored copy seen to date on eBay. It received a high bid of $70,100 but did not meet reserve. The previous restored condition record holder for this issue was a (restored) 7.5 copy that sold for $34,000 last year.

The record high bid ever for an *Action Comics* #1 on eBay occurred almost exactly a year ago. It was the Nicolas Cage copy that was in unrestored 4.5 condition. That one went for $75,000 in a Heritage auction.

GOLDEN AGE: Next up after the *Action Comics* #1 was a nice copy of *All-Star Comics* #3 in (restored) 7.0 condition. This highly sought-after issue features the origin and first appearance of The Justice Society of America. The auction topped out at $3,333.

The next issue on the list was *More Fun Comics* #16 in 6.0 (FN) condition. This issue was one of the first offered from the new "Lost Valley" pedigree. It went for $3,150.

SILVER AGE AND NEWER: A nice copy of *Showcase* #4 in 6.5 (FN+) condition brought $6,017. The Silver Age begins with the appearance of this book.

A beautiful *X-Men* #1 in 8.5 (VF+) condition received a high bid of $6,601. This is the highest bid received in the last year for an issue in this condition, but the auction failed to meet the seller's reserve.

An *Incredible Hulk* #181 in 9.6 (NM+) condition received a high bid of $3,600. There has been some slight softening in prices for high-grade copies of this popular issue. Prices seem to be off about 10% from the highs achieved, when the *X2* and *Hulk* movies were out.

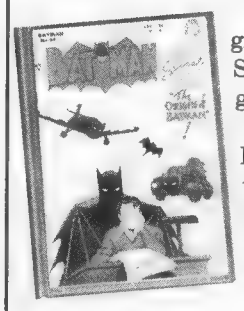
IN DEPTH: This week there were 1,543 auctions recorded receiving bids, versus 1,806 last week and 1,760 two weeks ago. Total dollar bidding was $289,572, versus $246,370 last week and $258,895 two weeks ago. There were 28 auctions receiving bids of $1,000 or more, compared to 38 last week and 39 two weeks ago.

***Darryl Buchanan** can be reached at **dbuchanan@thecomicsheet.com**.*

Noteworthy CGC Closing Prices on eBay (All copies are unrestored)

Issue	Grade	Price
Action Comics #1	9.0	**$70,100**
Action Comics #76	9.4	**$720**
Adventure Comics #100	6.5	**$259**
Adventure Comics #167	7.0	**$136**
All-American Comics #1	3.0	**$336**
All-American Comics #73	5.5	**$204**
All-Star Comics #10	2.0	**$182**
All-Star Comics #21	5.0	**$395**
Amazing Fantasy #15	3.5	**$1,717**
Amazing Spider-Man #1	4.0	**$1,351**
Amazing Spider-Man #3	5.5	**$233**
Amazing Spider-Man #4	7.5	**$1,041**
Amazing Spider-Man #4	5.0	**$257**
Amazing Spider-Man #5	5.0	**$267**
Amazing Spider-Man #5	4.0	**$215**
Amazing Spider-Man #6	5.5	**$320**
Amazing Spider-Man #7	7.0	**$355**
Amazing Spider-Man #7	7.0	**$289**
Amazing Spider-Man #8	7.0	**$325**
Amazing Spider-Man #8	6.5	**$286**
Amazing Spider-Man #8	6.0	**$208**
Amazing Spider-Man #8	4.0	**$144**
Amazing Spider-Man #9	4.0	**$160**
Amazing Spider-Man #10	7.0	**$332**
Amazing Spider-Man #14	8.0	**$1,150**
Amazing Spider-Man #14	7.5	**$381**
Amazing Spider-Man #14	6.0	**$495**
Amazing Spider-Man #16	7.5	**$265**
Amazing Spider-Man #23	7.5	**$164**
Amazing Spider-Man #27	9.0	**$365**
Amazing Spider-Man #27	7.5	**$147**
Amazing Spider-Man #28	8.5	**$515**
Amazing Spider-Man #28	7.5	**$307**
Amazing Spider-Man #28	7.0	**$178**
Amazing Spider-Man #30	9.0	**$193**
Amazing Spider-Man #37	9.0	**$210**
Amazing Spider-Man #37	8.5	**$130**
Amazing Spider-Man #40	9.2	**$612**
Amazing Spider-Man #40	8.0	**$182**
Amazing Spider-Man #41	8.0	**$132**
Amazing Spider-Man #42	9.2	**$330**
Amazing Spider-Man #43	9.0	**$178**
Amazing Spider-Man #45	9.4	**$510**
Amazing Spider-Man #45	9.4	**$456**
Amazing Spider-Man #47	9.4	**$405**
Amazing Spider-Man #49	9.2	**$160**
Amazing Spider-Man #51	9.0	**$174**
Amazing Spider-Man #53	9.0	**$129**
Amazing Spider-Man #62	9.4	**$236**
Amazing Spider-Man #64	9.6	**$385**
Amazing Spider-Man #75	9.4	**$214**
Amazing Spider-Man #95	9.4	**$128**
Amazing Spider-Man #98	9.6	**$521**
Amazing Spider-Man #117	9.4	**$124**
Amazing Spider-Man #120	9.6	**$335**
Amazing Spider-Man #120	9.6	**$321**
Amazing Spider-Man #122	8.5	**$188**
Amazing Spider-Man #125	9.6	**$320**
Amazing Spider-Man #129	9.4	**$900**
Amazing Spider-Man #129	8.0	**$256**
Amazing Spider-Man #129	7.0	**$173**
Amazing Spider-Man #130	9.6	**$173**
Amazing Spider-Man #137	9.8	**$760**
Amazing Spider-Man #137	9.6	**$285**
Amazing Spider-Man #138	9.6	**$151**
Amazing Spider-Man #168	9.8	**$132**
Amazing Spider-Man #238	9.6	**$225**
Amazing Spider-Man #238	9.6	**$163**
Amazing Spider-Man #299	9.8	**$153**
Amazing Spider-Man #300	9.6	**$203**
Amaz. Spider-Man Ann. #1	9.0	**$1,605**
Amaz. Spider-Man Ann. #2	8.5	**$190**
Animal Comics #6	9.2	**$152**
Aquaman #1	6.0	**$181**
Aquaman #26	9.6	**$255**
Avengers #4	7.0	**$589**
Avengers #4	4.0	**$255**
Avengers #10	9.4	**$482**
Avengers #15	9.0	**$123**
Avengers #52	9.4	**$142**
Avengers #56	9.4	**$133**
Avengers #57	9.2	**$255**
Avengers #70	9.4	**$133**
Batman #16	4.0	**$407**
Batman #21	6.5	**$386**
Batman #23	7.5	**$664**
Batman #27	8.5	**$927**
Batman #28	5.0	**$260**
Batman #39	4.5	**$200**
Batman #47	8.0	**$2,620**
Batman #92	7.0	**$505**
Batman #94	7.5	**$255**
Batman #96	7.0	**$335**
Batman #104	7.5	**$179**
Batman #108	7.5	**$188**
Batman #109	8.0	**$286**
Batman #115	7.0	**$165**
Batman #121	8.0	**$165**
Batman #128	8.5	**$209**
Batman #141	9.0	**$255**
Batman #149	9.0	**$129**
Batman #153	9.2	**$215**
Batman #159	9.0	**$212**
Batman #161	9.0	**$129**
Batman #163	9.0	**$229**
Batman #168	9.0	**$126**
Batman #170	9.0	**$133**
Batman #183	9.0	**$155**
Batman #186	9.4	**$460**
Batman #187	9.2	**$144**
Batman #189	9.4	**$660**
Batman #199	9.4	**$401**
Batman #200	9.2	**$191**
Batman #208	9.4	**$305**
Batman #209	9.2	**$130**
Batman #218	9.4	**$305**
Batman #227	9.2	**$158**
Batman #231	9.6	**$168**
Batman #232	9.4	**$520**
Batman #233	9.2	**$138**
Batman #234	9.2	**$283**
Batman #240	9.4	**$201**
Batman #248	9.4	**$134**
Batman #256	9.2	**$141**
Batman #257	9.2	**$138**
Batman #258	9.4	**$174**
Batman #261	9.6	**$355**
Batman #608	9.8	**$150**
Batman (2nd Print) #608	9.8	**$198**
Batman (2nd Print) #608	9.8	**$132**
Batman (RRP) #608	9.0	**$692**
Batman: The Killing Joke #1	9.9	**$120**
Beware The Creeper #5	9.4	**$130**
Black Terror #13	7.5	**$202**
Boy Commandos #1	5.0	**$457**
Brave And The Bold #28	3.5	**$422**
Buccaneers #19	8.0	**$224**
Buck Rogers #2	5.0	**$143**
Buck Rogers #3	4.0	**$179**
Captain America #100	9.4	**$685**
Captain America #100	9.2	**$403**
Captain America #100	8.0	**$178**
Captain Marvel #3	9.8	**$244**
Captain Marvel Jr. #1	5.0	**$889**
Captain Science #1	5.0	**$159**
Chamber Of Chills #22	8.5	**$152**
Conan The Barbarian #1	9.4	**$525**
Conan The Barbarian #1	9.4	**$512**
Conan The Barbarian #4	9.6	**$204**
Conan The Barbarian #24	9.8	**$450**
Crime Does Not Pay #24	5.0	**$1,202**
Daredevil #1	7.0	**$787**
Daredevil #4	9.0	**$356**
Daredevil #4	7.0	**$149**
Daredevil #5	9.4	**$1,129**
Daredevil #9	9.6	**$565**
Daredevil #9	9.4	**$360**
Daredevil #10	9.2	**$475**
Daredevil #12	9.2	**$400**
Daredevil #19	9.4	**$382**
Daredevil #41	9.6	**$160**
Daredevil #45	9.6	**$163**
Daredevil #108	9.8	**$199**
Daredevil #113	9.8	**$255**
Daredevil #168	9.4	**$217**
Daredevil #181	9.8	**$135**
Defenders #1	9.4	**$306**
Defenders #10	9.2	**$128**
Detective Comics #18	1.5	**$810**
Detective Comics #40	7.5	**$1,037**
Detective Comics #51	6.5	**$475**
Detective Comics #61	4.0	**$265**
Detective Comics #78	6.0	**$220**
Detective Comics #99	7.5	**$340**
Detective Comics #143	7.0	**$204**

Batman #47 sells for $2,620



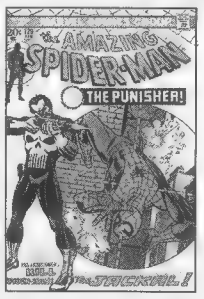
A copy of *Batman* #47 (Jun 48) graded 8.0 (VF) sold for $2,620 on Sept. 30 on eBay. There is one graded better at 8.5 (VF+).

The issue retells the origin of Batman, adding new details to the original stories from *Detective Comics* #27 and *Batman* #1, including the origins of The Batmobile and The Batplane.

– Nathan Melby

Retailer Reporter

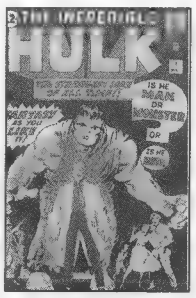
Compiled by **Brent Frankenhoff**



• Tampa, Fla., retailer William Insignares, owner of Demolition Comics, recently sold a copy of *Amazing Spider-Man* #129, the first appearance of The Punisher, for $450. A second copy sold for $495. In addition, a copy of *Amazing Spider-Man* #10, the first appearance of The Enforcers (Fancy Dan, Montana, and Ox), sold for $450. He also sold an *Incredible Hulk* #181, the first appearance of Wolverine, for $850 and an *Incredible Hulk* #182 for $175. A second copy of #181 sold for $700 ,and a copy of #180 (which contains a Wolverine cameo at the end of the issue) sold for $200. Conditions were not specified for any of these issues.

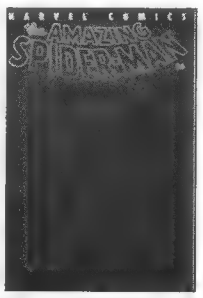
Of more recent back issues, Insignares sold a Near Mint copy of *30 Days of Night* #1 for $95.

Insignares wrote that, in his store, back issues of *Punisher* and *Namor*, as well as *JLA* and *JSA*, were showing increased interest among collectors, while back issues of titles from Future Comics had shown decreased interest.



• John Hitchcock, owner and manager of Parts Unknown in Greensboro, N.C., sold several significant back issues of *Amazing Spider-Man* recently. Among his sales were #2 in Very Good for $1,000, #5 in Very Good- for $250, #10 in Very Good- for $200, #12 in Very Fine for $400, and #14 in Fine for $400. In addition, he sold a restored copy of *Incredible Hulk* #1 in Very Fine for $2,800.

He also noted that back issues of *Incredible Hulk* and *Teen Titans* had shown increased interest "for obvious reasons," while back issues of *Legion of Super-Heroes* and *Silver Surfer* had decreased in interest.



• Nicholas Coffey, owner and CEO of Danger Zone in Salem, Ore., sold a copy of *Amazing Spider-Man* Vol. 2 #36 for $20, a *JLA* #1 for $15, a *Batman* #612 for $7.50, and a *Legion Lost* #1 for $30. All were in Near Mint condition.

Coffey also noted that, while collectors were showing increased interest in back issues of *Uncanny X-Men* (specifically #141-200) and all Vertigo titles, most other DC back issues were cooling off in his sales.

These reports are compiled from retailers reporting sales to **Comics & Games Retailer**'s Market Beat. To be included in future reports, retailers can fill out the "Aftermarket Reporter" section of the response card inserted into every issue of the magazine.

EXCLUSIVE CGC PRICE INDEX

For CGC-graded comics auctioned, ***Comics Buyer's Guide*** compared the differences between the **median closing price offered** at each grade and ***The 2003 CBG Checklist & Price Guide*** price for an ungraded NM copy.

COMICS PUBLISHED BEFORE 1990

CGC comics graded **9.9** "Mint" ...sold for a median price of **NM+2750%** (or **28.5** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **36** (95% of all) 9.9 copies sold on eBay*

CGC comics graded **9.8** "Near Mint/ Mint" ...sold for a median price of **NM+898%** (or **9.98** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **1,544** (81% of all) 9.8 copies sold on eBay*

CGC comics graded **9.6** "Near Mint+" ...sold for a median price of **NM+463%** (or **5.63** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **2,635** (80% of all) 9.6 copies sold on eBay*

CGC comics graded **9.4** "Near Mint" ...sold for a median price of **NM+306%** (or **4.1** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **2,617** (80% of all) 9.4 copies sold on eBay*

CBG's definition: *Barely perceptible wear, tight spine. Some discoloration acceptable in older comics.*

CGC comics graded **9.2** "Near Mint-" ...sold for a median price of **NM+132%** (or **2.32** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **1,728** (81% of all) 9.2 copies sold on eBay*

CGC comics graded **9.0** "Very Fine/ Near Mint" ...sold for a median price of **NM+65%** (or **1.7** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **1,221** (80% of all) 9.0 copies sold on eBay*

CGC comics graded **8.5** "Very Fine+" ...sold for a median of **NM +14%** (or **1.1** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **917** (79% of all) 8.5 copies sold on eBay*

CGC comics graded **8.0** "Very Fine" ...sold for a median price of **NM -13%** (or **0.87** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **755** (78% of all) 8.0 copies sold on eBay*

CBG's definition: *Slight creases, wrinkles at staples, some loss of gloss. Otherwise a flat, clean issue.*

CGC comics graded **7.5** "Very Fine-" ...sold for a median price of **NM -37%** (or **0.63** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **517** (75% of all) 7.5 copies sold on eBay*

CGC comics graded **7.0** "Fine/ Very Fine" ...sold for a median price of **NM -49%** (or **0.51** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **452** (75% of all) 7.0 copies sold on eBay*

CGC comics graded **6.0** "Fine" ...sold for a median price of **NM -68%** (or **0.32** times the NM guide price) **in the quarter beginning June 1**
*Sample: **249** (71% of all) 6.0 copies sold on eBay*

CBG's definition: *Cover worn but clean; no tape or writing. Stress lines, more rounded corners.*

Issue	Grade	Price
Detective Comics #225	8.5	$924
Detective Comics #242	8.0	$149
Doll Man #8	6.5	$204
Eternals (30 Cent) #1	9.4	$152
Famous Funnies #143	9.4	$143
Famous Funnies #148	9.4	$143
Famous Stars #5	7.0	$155
Fantastic Four #1	1.8	$880
Fantastic Four #2	4.5	$500
Fantastic Four #4	6.0	$561
Fantastic Four #15	8.0	$372
Fantastic Four #20	8.5	$316
Fantastic Four #41	9.6	$850
Fantastic Four #48	9.6	$2,550
Fantastic Four #48	9.4	$1,675
Fantastic Four #48	8.0	$495
Fantastic Four #48	7.5	$400
Fantastic Four #52	9.4	$1,009
Fantastic Four #55	9.0	$144
Fantastic Four #75	9.4	$157
Fantastic Four #99	9.6	$270
Fantastic Four #100	9.4	$203
Fantastic Four #100	9.2	$149
Fantastic Four #116	9.4	$171
Fantastic Four #150	9.6	$125
Fantastic Four Annual #1	9.0	$887
Fantastic Four Annual #2	8.0	$257
Fight Comics #36	7.5	$180
Flash #176	9.4	$138
Flash #183	9.4	$129
Flash #210	9.6	$160
Flintstones #1	9.4	$122
Four Color #70	7.5	$255
Four Color #115	6.5	$150
Four Color #120	7.5	$215
Four Color #131	8.0	$252
Frankenstein (Monster Of) #1	9.4	$223
Frankenstein (Monster Of) #9	9.6	$160
Giant-Size Avengers #1	9.6	$154
Giant-Size Avengers #3	9.4	$129
Giant-Size Fantastic Four #6	9.6	$165
Giant-Size Invaders #1	9.6	$202
Giant-Size Spider-Man #1	9.4	$305
Giant-Size Spider-Man #4	9.4	$120
Giant-Size X-Men #1	9.6	$1,734
Giant-Size X-Men #1	9.4	$1,205
Giant-Size X-Men #1	9.0	$600
Giant-Size X-Men #1	9.0	$595
Giant-Size X-Men #1	9.0	$591
Giant-Size X-Men #1	9.0	$525
Giant-Size X-Men #1	9.0	$492
Giant-Size X-Men #1	8.5	$490
Giant-Size X-Men #1	8.5	$405
Giant-Size X-Men #1	8.0	$305
Giant-Size X-Men #1	7.5	$325
Giant-Size X-Men #1	7.0	$250
Giant-Size X-Men #1	5.0	$125
Green Lantern #16	4.0	$208
Green Lantern Vol. 2 #1	5.0	$603
Green Lantern Vol. 2 #14	9.2	$366
Green Lantern Vol. 2 #40	9.0	$400
Green Lantern Vol. 2 #51	9.4	$178
Green Lantern Vol. 2 #56	9.4	$158
Green Lantern Vol. 2 #73	9.4	$200
Haunt Of Fear #18	9.0	$290
Hawkman #1	8.0	$251
Hawkman #6	9.4	$203
House Of Mystery #1	2.5	$218
House Of Mystery #195	9.4	$162
House Of Secrets #92	8.5	$380
Howdy Doody #3	9.2	$275
I Spy #6	9.4	$138
Incredible Hulk #4	7.5	$850
Incredible Hulk #102	8.0	$140
Incredible Hulk #160	9.8	$163
Incredible Hulk #180	8.5	$129
Incredible Hulk #181	9.6	$3,600
Incredible Hulk #181	9.2	$1,222
Incredible Hulk #181	9.2	$1,161
Incredible Hulk #181	8.0	$500
Incredible Hulk #181	6.0	$300
Iron Fist #14	9.4	$256

Fantastic Four #48 closes at $2,550

A copy of *Fantastic Four* #48 (Mar 66) graded 9.6 (NM+) sold for $2,550 on Oct. 3 on eBay. There are six graded better, all of them graded 9.8 (NM/M).

The issue, by Jack Kirby and Stan Lee, features the first appearance of Silver Surfer and Galactus and an appearance by The Inhumans.

– Nathan Melby

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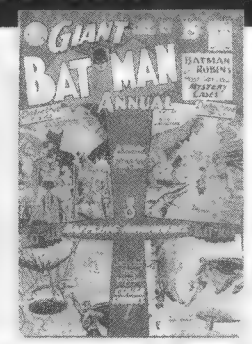

- **Sample collector rates:** $3,000 for $14, $10,000 for $38, $25,000 for $95, $50,000 for $190, $100,000 for $278, $200,000 for $418. Above $200,000, rate is $1.40 per $1,000.
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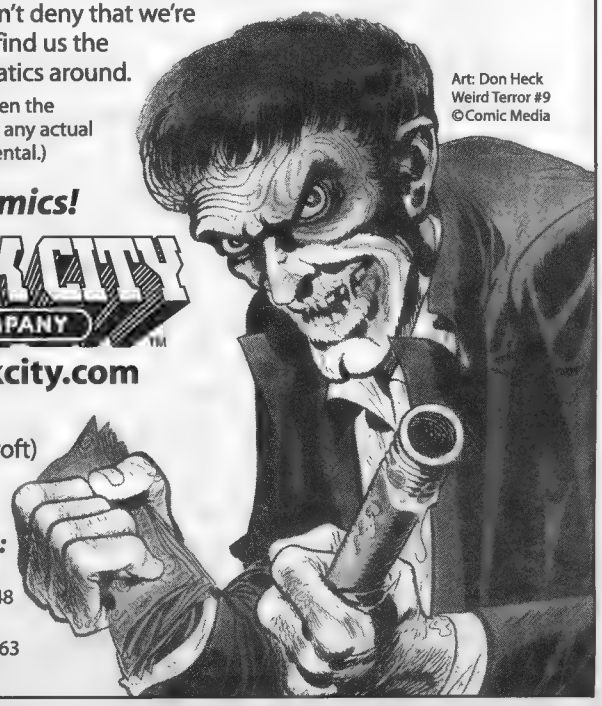

Art: Don Heck
Weird Terror #9
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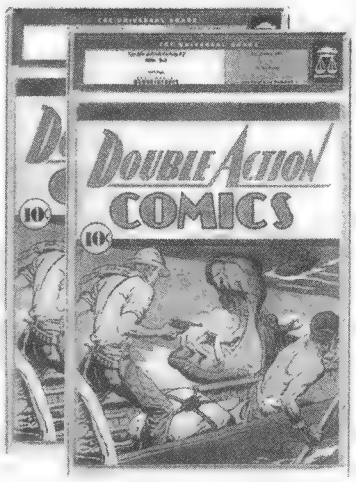

Double Action #2
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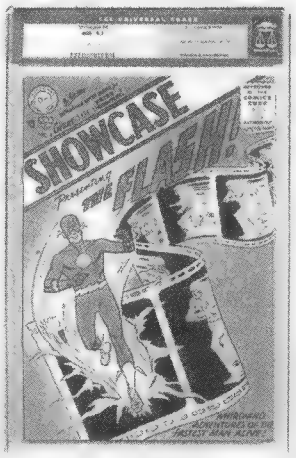

Showcase #4
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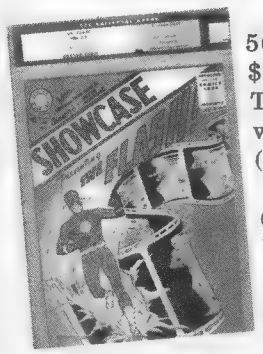
Issue	Grade	Price
Iron Fist (35 Cent) #15	4.0	$123
Iron Man #1	9.4	$812
Iron Man #1	8.0	$250
Iron Man #1	6.0	$138
Iron Man #2	9.4	$185
Iron Man #3	9.4	$179
Iron Man #5	9.4	$247
Iron Man #20	9.4	$138
Iron Man #22	9.6	$162
Iron Man #55	9.8	$1,814
Journey Into Mystery #100	9.0	$350
Journey Into Mystery #112	9.0	$381
Journey Into Mystery #121	9.2	$150
Justice League Of America #1	8.0	$2,250
Justice League Of America #83	9.4	$127
Kamandi #1	9.6	$154
Lady Death: The Crucible #1/2	10.0	$129
Marge's Little Lulu #2	6.5	$134
Marvel Authentix: Amazing Spider-Man #1	9.9	$295
Marvel Authentix: Amazing Spider-Man #1	9.8	$305
Marvel Feature #1	9.4	$455
Marvel Mystery Comics #147	0	$1,112
Marvel Mystery Comics #88	8.0	$675
Marvel Premiere #15	9.2	$203
Marvel Spotlight #5	9.2	$367
Marvel Two-In-One #1	9.6	$550
More Fun Comics #16	6.0	$3,150
More Fun Comics #27	7.5	$1,700
More Fun Comics #59	5.0	$325
More Fun Comics #78	4.0	$385
New Gods #1	9.6	$231
New York World's Fair #1939	3.0	$1,500
New York World's Fair #1940	2.5	$711
Not Brand Echh #13	9.6	$350
Omac #1	9.8	$150
Phantom Lady #23	3.0	$300
Planet Comics #45	8.0	$380
Planet Comics #50	8.0	$255
Planet Comics #53	5.0	$150
Plastic Man #4	8.5	$202
Primer #2	9.6	$125
Primer #2	9.6	$120
Punisher #1	9.8	$125
Samson #2	7.5	$307
Sandman (Variant) #8	9.6	$204
Sensation Comics #15	3.5	$163
Showcase #4	6.5	$6,017
Showcase #13	5.0	$463
Showcase #13	5.0	$369
Showcase #13	4.0	$442
Showcase #22	3.0	$395
Showcase #27	6.5	$125
Showcase #33	7.0	$200
Silver Surfer #1	7.5	$203
Silver Surfer #4	9.2	$535
Silver Surfer #4	7.5	$188
Silver Surfer #9	9.4	$170
Speed #32	6.0	$183
Spider-Man (Platinum) #1	9.0	$125
Spirit Vol. 2 #2	8.0	$315
Star Spangled Comics #73	7.5	$239
Star Spangled War Stories #10	8.5	$190
Star Wars #1	9.6	$133
Startling Comics #10	5.0	$790
Startling Comics #44	5.0	$174
Startling Comics #51	7.5	$300
Strange Tales #12	8.5	$300
Strange Tales #99	8.5	$232
Strange Tales #114	9.0	$391
Sub-Mariner #1	9.6	$660
Sub-Mariner Comics #20	5.5	$355
Sub-Mariner Comics #40	6.5	$255
Sun Girl #1	7.5	$650
Superman #4	5.5	$789
Superman #7	6.0	$415
Superman #8	7.5	$512
Superman #85	9.4	$128
Superman #226	9.4	$121
Super-Mystery Comics #1	4.0	$168
Superworld #2	7.0	$711
Swamp Thing #1	9.6	$401
Tales Of Suspense #21	8.0	$354
Tales Of Suspense #27	8.0	$318
Tales Of Suspense #40	8.0	$760
Tales Of Suspense #49	7.5	$174
Tales Of Suspense #89	9.4	$175
Tales To Astonish #55	9.4	$270
Tales To Astonish #93	9.2	$185
Thor #163	9.6	$125
Thor #169	9.4	$135
Thrilling Comics #70	8.0	$250
Tomahawk #1	4.5	$299
Tomahawk #3	6.0	$135
Ultimate Spider-Man #1	9.6	$188
Ultimate Spider-Man #1	9.6	$174
Ultimate Spider-Man #1	9.6	$168
Ultimate Spider-Man #1	9.6	$165
Ultimate Spider-Man (DF) #19	9.6	$281
Ultimate Spider-Man (DF) #19	9.6	$225
Ultimate Spider-Man (White Variant) #1	9.6	$351
Ultimate Spider-Man (White Variant) #1	9.4	$295
Ultimate Spider-Man (White Variant) #1	9.0	$153
Ultimate Spider-Man #2	9.8	$202
Ultimate Spider-Man #2	9.8	$192
Ultimate Spider-Man #5	9.8	$499
Ultimate Spider-Man #5	9.8	$441
Ultimate Spider-Man #5	9.6	$124
Uncanny X-Men #1	8.5	$6,602
Uncanny X-Men #1	4.0	$767
Uncanny X-Men #2	4.5	$275
Uncanny X-Men #3	6.5	$200
Uncanny X-Men #6	8.0	$267
Uncanny X-Men #8	8.5	$287
Uncanny X-Men #9	7.0	$128
Uncanny X-Men #10	9.2	$500
Uncanny X-Men #10	8.0	$203
Uncanny X-Men #10	7.5	$134
Uncanny X-Men #18	8.0	$154
Uncanny X-Men #21	9.4	$342
Uncanny X-Men #45	9.4	$169
Uncanny X-Men #45	9.4	$139
Uncanny X-Men #50	9.2	$128
Uncanny X-Men #94	8.5	$355
Uncanny X-Men #94	7.5	$255
Uncanny X-Men #94	7.5	$190
Uncanny X-Men #94	7.0	$227
Uncanny X-Men #94	7.0	$203
Uncanny X-Men #94	7.0	$180
Uncanny X-Men #95	9.4	$252
Uncanny X-Men #97	9.4	$227
Uncanny X-Men #97	9.2	$120
Uncanny X-Men #98	9.4	$153
Uncanny X-Men (30 Cent) #98	8.0	$154
Uncanny X-Men #106	9.6	$175
Uncanny X-Men #109	9.6	$234
Uncanny X-Men #121	9.4	$123
Uncanny X-Men #133	9.8	$265
Uncanny X-Men #135	9.8	$225
Uncanny X-Men #266	9.8	$188
Uncle Sam Quarterly #1	3.0	$394
Weird Mystery Tales #1	9.8	$500
Weird Science #6	6.0	$135
Werewolf By Night #32	9.2	$150
Whiz Comics #27	8.0	$324
Witches Tales #18	9.0	$170
Wolverine #10	9.8	$153
Wolverine (mini-series) #1	9.8	$255
Wolverine (mini-series) #1	9.8	$228
Wolverine (mini-series) #2	9.8	$245
Wolverine (mini-series) #3	9.8	$138
Wolverine (mini-series) #4	9.8	$215
Wonder Comics #16	9.4	$1,312
Wonder Woman #105	7.0	$455
Wonder Woman #199	9.4	$153
Wonder Woman #210	9.8	$143
World's Finest Comics #6	7.5	$734
X-Men: Prime #1	10.0	$155
Young Allies #20	8.0	$795
Young Allies #20	8.0	$455
Zoot Comics #12	8.0	$185

Showcase #4 sells for $6,017



A copy of *Showcase* #4 (Oct 56) graded 6.5 (F+) sold for $6,017 on Sept. 28 on eBay. There are nine graded better, with the highest graded 9.4 (NM).

The issue, with art by Carmine Infantine and Joe Kubert, features the first appearance and origin of the Silver Age Flash, Barry Allen. Moreover, the issue is the key comic book that most collectors regard as the start of the Silver Age of Comics.

– Nathan Melby

Comics shop directory

The following is a listing of comic shops across the country, arranged by state. Be sure to mention that you saw it in CBG!

Retailers listed in bold sell Comics Buyer's Guide in their stores. For information on how you can sell Comics Buyer's Guide in your store contact your Comics Distributor or our Bulk Sales Department at 715-445-2214.

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This section features listings for retail comics stores around the U.S. Traveling comics collectors of all types search for new stores to dig through on their vacations, business trips, etc. Advertise your establishment here, including approximately ten words of miscellaneous description, for only $4.25 an issue. You can buy this space in increments of 26 or 52 issues, for $110.50 or $221.00 respectively. Send in your store name, address, phone number, and approximately ten words of description, along with your payment. If you stock *Comics Buyer's Guide* we'll put your listing in boldface type.

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An open letter to Marvel from 1979

By **Chuck Rozanski**

In my past two columns, I have alluded to a letter I sent to Marvel Comics in 1979. Rather than continue to paraphrase what I said in that letter, I decided to track down a copy so as to print it in its entirety. While it was not the most diplomatic of letters, through pure circumstance, it was ultimately to have a profound effect on the future of the direct market. I'll discuss the wide-ranging consequences of my letter in my next column.

5-9-79

Robert T. Maiello, Manager, Sales Administration
Marvel Comics Group
575 Madison Ave.
New York, NY 10022

Dear Mr. Maiello:

My name is Charles Rozanski, and I own Mile High Comics. I am one of the largest comic-book retailers in America (sales 1979 about $400,000), and thus a customer of yours. I am also a small advertiser in your comic books. This letter is an attempt on my part to bring to your attention some suggestions which I believe will be relevant, if your job truly encompasses sales and promotion.

To begin with, I have been an active retailer of your products for over four years. Starting with no more than 15 of any comic title, I am now purchasing over 10,000 Marvel comics a month on a nonreturnable basis. I get these books through Seagate Distributing (Jonni Levas, Phil Seuling). It is my latest order with them that has especially prompted this letter.

My order (of which a photocopy is enclosed) for your products is just under $4,000 for this month. These are books that will arrive between June 10 and July 10. Under your existing policies you have just lost at least $1,000 in sales. The reason: After putting my order together I cut my list to the bone in order not to have to lay out any more up-front cash than was absolutely necessary during May, a slower month for my business. So, we both lose: you lose my business, and I lose those sales that I could have gotten by having a reserve instead of ordering just barely enough for my guaranteed sales.

Why is this foolishness still necessary? In November of last year an "outside consultant" who supposedly was representing Cadence Industries/Marvel Comics approached us about direct contact with your office and the possibility of some mutually beneficial programs. He told us he would get back to us in December. We have heard nothing. Did you send out a representative? If so, did he present you with a breakdown of what is happening? I am going to take your silence of the past six months as evidence that either the "consultant" in question did not really work for you or else did his job very poorly. Or, there is one other possibility. Did he tell you that you would be better off without us? Is this why rumors of a lawsuit on predatory pricing are circulating? For your sake and mine, I hope not.

Whatever the case may be, I think it is about time you heard from a retailer directly. Ours is a dying industry and if we don't get together and cooperate there will be no comic books at all. If you don't believe me, check with John Goldwater, the president of the Comic Magazine Association of America. According to him, circulation from 1959 to 1978 dropped from 600,000,000 to 250,000,000. This alone should be enough for your office to be highly interested in actively seeking to expand our business as much as possible.

Well this has not been the case. The policies currently in force are restricting severely the ability of comic book retailers to grow or even in some cases to stay even. How can you justify continuing to require advance payment for all comic deliveries? Do you realize the cost in lost sales of this policy? As I pointed out earlier, I would have spent another $1,000, this month alone, on your products. Multiply my business by the hundreds of independent retailers, large and small, across the nation, and you come up with a staggering sum that is being wasted. Stop and think, what is the variable cost of a 40¢ comic? When you have already paid all your costs except paper and shipping, how much does it cost to leave the presses running for another 10,000 copies? My guess is between 3¢ and 5¢ a copy. In a business with razor-thin margins, you can't afford not to get every bit of profit available

And don't be misled, we do not siphon off business from existing distributor accounts. Quite to the contrary, we salvage thousands of customers who otherwise would have left the field in disgust at the poor distribution. When you print continued stories, it is imperative that the customer who wants the next issue should be able to find it easily. This is not currently the case. Comic books are among the lowest items on a normal distributor's priority list. And thus the whole point of continued stories (i.e. creating customer demand for future issues) is lost, and instead the opposite occurs as customers quit buying from frustration. Pardon me for being the one to say it, but that is stupid.

Another point is that we do not just salvage customers you otherwise would have lost, we also create new ones. At 40¢ and up, comics are no longer able to sell themselves. You have made the product so thin and unattractive with advertising that it takes salesmanship to get them to sell, even to collectors. How much salesmanship do you get in a 7-11? We go out of our way to sell comics, they are our main business. (For example, the *Superman the Movie* book from DC ... I set up a stand in a local theater and sold over 1,200). Isn't it about time we got some help and support?

Well enough of generalities. After four years I have some concrete suggestions that will make you money and make me money. Here they are:

1) Give us billing or at least COD purchases.

2) Start a cooperative advertising program to promote comics.

3) Pay for artists and writers to do promotional tours.

4) Give us better information about what is coming out. We will buy many more books if the uncertainty about artists, *etc.* is alleviated.

5) Start up a listing (on one of the ad pages) where comic book retailers could list themselves at cost.

6) Make it an editorial policy to support us. Present policy never even mentions we exist.

7) Ask us for feedback. When you do something, we hear about it, believe me.

8) Set up a remainder sales division. Since I, and many other retailers, also sell back issues, we would buy thousands more comics if they were available at a remainder price instead of normal cost.

While I realize that not all of the above suggestions are currently viable, at this point anything would be better than the situation as it exists. I sincerely believe that I am echoing the sentiments of other independent dealers when I say I am tired of not getting any help from you, the people who benefit from my efforts. Right now, comics are my life. I work seven days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day, to make my business exist and your business better. And you have been no damn help at all.

So please give me some feedback. We are both in the same business and cooperation between us can do nothing but make our mutual jobs easier and business more profitable. I'll be awaiting your reply.

Sincerely,
Charles W. Rozanski

P.S. I am going to distribute this letter as widely as I can and ask my fellow dealers to send you signed copies to indicate their agreement with most of my points. Without an official organization to support us (we are all very independent) this is the best I can do to prove that other dealers are in agreement with my opinions.

To be continued ...

What customers are buying ...

Top Golden and Silver Age sold
by Mile High, from Sept. 26-Oct. 2, 2003:

1. *Green Lantern* #3 in FN	$269.50
2. *Green Lantern* #7 in VF	$224.00
3. *Captain America* Vol. 1 #100 in FN	$151.20
4. *Detective Comics* #167 in VG	$142.95
5. *Strange Adventures* #10 in GD	$127.05
6. *Journey into Mystery* #90 in FN	$118.20
7. *Amazing Spider-Man* Vol. 1 #41 in FN	$110.25
8. *Tales of Suspense* #57 in FN	$106.35
9. *Tales of Suspense* #58 in VG	$99.30
10. *Tales of Suspense* #66 in FN	$85.05

Top Modern comics sold
by Mile High, from Sept. 26-Oct. 2, 2003:

1. *Ultimate Spider-Man* #1 in NM	$126.00
2. *Iron Man* Vol. 1 #55 in VF	$99.90
3. *Ultimate X-Men* #1 in NM	$78.75
4. *Miracleman* #24 in VF	$72.00
5. *Avengers* Vol. 1 #100 in FN	$65.00
6. *Ultimate Spider-Man* #2 (cover B) in NM	$63.00
7. *Ultimate Spider-Man* #5 in NM	$50.40
8. *Incredible Hulk* #340 in NM	$47.25
9. *X-Men* Vol. 1 #140 in NM	$47.25
10. *Daredevil* Vol. 1 #107 in NM	$45.00

The above reports show items sold through Mile High's website and are often the result of a weekly special.

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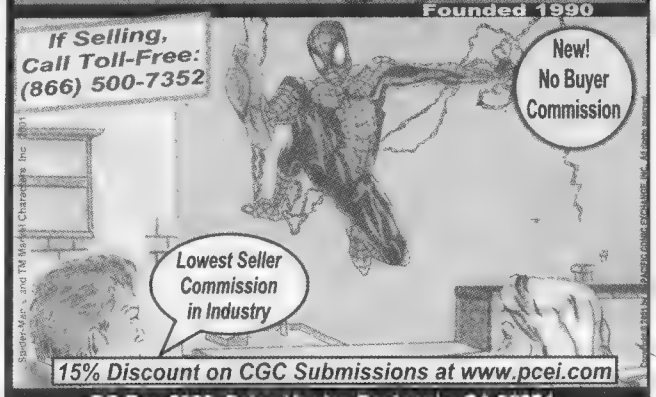

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21 F-VF	486.00	39 F-VF ex 1 pgMNS		116,118 F+	116.00	11 Poor	16.00
27 G-VG	158.00	very lt SSc	150.00	118 last pg		Witches Tales	
85 VF	318.00	40 VG-F	250.00	MNS Poor	18.00	7 VG-F	63.00
104	34.00	40 Fair+	77.00	119 Poor	18.00	Witchcraft	
Strange Adventures		41,49 F	240.00	121 Fair-G	26.00	1 Poor	33.00
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Strange Tales		49 TA BCMPoor	40.00	3 VG-F	125.00	4 Fair-G	16.00
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114 VG	69.00	78 Fair-G	49.00	63 VF	157.00	5 VG+	141.00
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29 TA VG	236.00	100 G-VG	300.00	5 VG+	75.00	42 F-VF ex sm	
30 VG	455.00	100 VG	400.00	11 F-VF	115.00	cc S at bc	78.00
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*I originally started this as a story proposal with **Batman** chasing the **Joker** into **Andy Griffith's** Maybury and sent it to **DC.** Perhaps if **Denny O'Neill** had been at all nice to me I mighta just given up on it. However, (and perhaps he was just having a bad day) he was so crabby and condescending (he told me that I had a better chance of winning the lottery than in having a Batman story published) that I decided then and there I was gonna write the thing anyway. I made the protagonist a French Black man and the Joker a pale Nazi. You can read the first two chapters on-line free at **RALPHAGESSNER.com**. Check it out and see if Denny was actually being kind.*

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Convention Preview

Oct. 31-Nov. 2
Las Vegas, Nevada

WHAT, WHERE, AND WHEN

Where:
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Hours:
Oct. 31: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Nov. 1: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Nov. 2: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Admission:
$45 for a three-day pass (purchased by Oct. 22) or $20 for a one-day pass. Children 10 and under admitted free.

A separate admission charge of $28 per person ($18 with a convention badge) will be collected for the Friday night Masquerade.

Hotels:
The Luxor and Excalibur Hotels are offering discounted room rates through Oct. 22. Ask for the group code, XCOMIC, when making room reservations.

The Luxor has rates of $129 per night Friday and Saturday with a reduced rate of $79 Thursday and Sunday night.

The Excalibur has a rate of $89 per night Friday and Saturday and $49 Thursday and Sunday night.

A link for hotel reservations can be found at the convention's website.

For more information:
Call toll-free (866) 36-COMIC (362-6642) or visit the website at *www.LasVegasComicCon.com*.

Comics come to Vegas

First Las Vegas Comic-Con gets dressed up for Halloween

The Mandalay Bay Convention Center is the site of the first Las Vegas Comic-Con Oct. 31-Nov. 2. Event Director Robert Brueggeman has planned a three-day show with "a wide variety of activities for adults and children interested in comics, anime, film, videogames, and role-playing games.

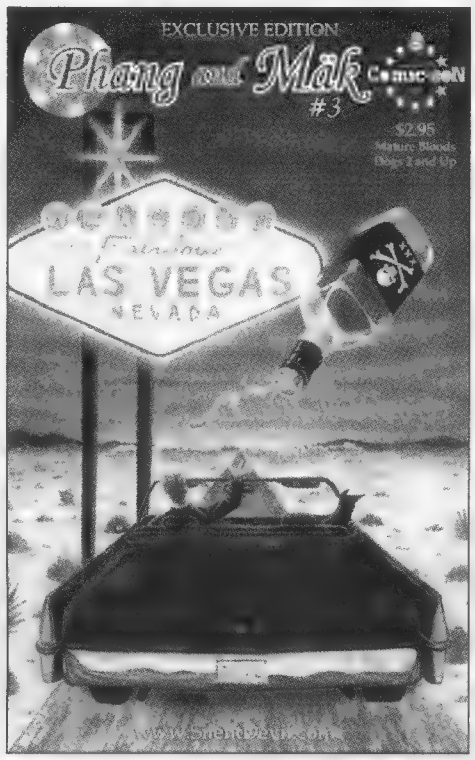
"There will be celebrity autograph guests, interactive gaming contests, and a prize-filled Halloween party."

With the show preceding the Diamond Comic Distributors and Alliance Game Distributors 2003 Las Vegas Retailer Summit scheduled for the same venue Nov. 3 and 4, more than 400 exhibitors are scheduled to attend the show with a convention mix of comics, toys, and movie memorabilia. "Virtually all areas of comic art and entertainment will be covered, from science fiction to fantasy, from the super-heroes of the Golden Age to the most recent anime and action-adventure card games," Brueggeman said.

Guests. At presstime, such comics creators as Brian Azzarello, Brian Michael Bendis, Dan Brereton, Jim Cheung, Roman Dirge, Butch Guice, Sean McKeever, Steven Niles, Brian Pulido, Chris Reilly, Darick Robertson, Jill Thompson, Bill Willingham, J.H. Williams III, and Judd Winick were scheduled to attend.

In addition, celebrity guests including Mark Hamill and Justin Berfield (Reese from *Malcolm in the Middle*) are scheduled to appear.

Hamill will host a panel at 4 p.m. Oct. 31, featuring previews and outtakes from his upcoming film *Comic Book: The Movie*, a "mockumentary" about a fictional Golden Age character's revival, scheduled for direct-to-video release this January from Miramax. In addition to Hamill, other actors from the film, including Donna D'Errico, Billy West, Roger Rose, Jess Harnell, Tom Kenny, Lori Alan, and Daran Norris, are scheduled to appear at the panel. An autograph session is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 1, from 1 to 3 p.m.



An exclusive cover edition of Phang and Mäk #3 will be offered at the show by Silent Devil Productions.

Panels. Question-and-answer sessions with many of the show's guests are scheduled throughout the show. In addition, anime and manga panels and screenings featuring products from ADV Films, Animego, AnimeNetwork, Bandai Entertainment, Central Park Media, Dark Horse, Funimation, Manga Entertainment, Synch-Point, TokyoPop, and Urban Vision are planned.

A pair of premieres. In addition to the launch of *Punch and Judy: A Grand Guignol* by Christopher P. Reilly (announced in ***CBG*** #1561), Silent Devil Productions has announced it will release an exclusive edition of *Phang and Mäk* #3 at the show. Limited to 1,000 copies, the issue features a painted cover by Jeff Bracey showing the title characters cruising through the desert on their way to Las Vegas. The issue concludes the three-part mini-series.

***Dragon Ball Z*'s Goku can be seen at the show's anime screenings and in the trading-card gaming area.**

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Halloween party and masquerade. To celebrate the holiday and the show's first day, organizers have scheduled a separate party and masquerade Oct. 31, beginning at 7:30 p.m. A separate admission of $28 per person or $18 with a Las Vegas Comic-Con pass is required.

The masquerade has more than $40,000 in cash and prizes available, split between $5,000 in door prizes and $35,000 in cash and prizes awarded to competitors in nine costume categories: Best Horror Costume, Best Creature Costume, Sexiest Costume, Best Group Costume, Best Anime Character, Best Professional Costume, Best Anime Group Costume, Best Re-Creation of a Film Character, and Best Sony Playstation 2 Videogame Character.

First-place winners in each category will receive $2,000, and a "Best in Show" winner will receive $10,000 in cash. Other prizes will also be awarded, but information was unavailable at presstime.

"This show will be the largest event of its kind in Las Vegas," Brueggeman said, "a colorful gathering of artists, writers, creators, publishers, dealers, collectors, and the general public." ✦

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BATMAN COMICS	171	VG+/FN	$109	CLASSIC COMICS	33	VG[R]	$239
BATMAN COMICS	200	VF/NM	$239	CLASSIC COMICS	35	VG+[st]	$109
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BRAVE AND BOLD	29	VG+	$449	DAREDEVIL COMICS[1964]	10	VF/NM	$289
BRAVE AND BOLD	43	FN/FN+	$154	DAREDEVIL COMICS[1964]	11	VF+/NM	$109
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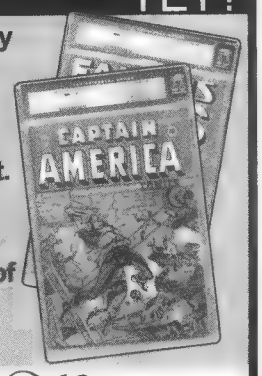

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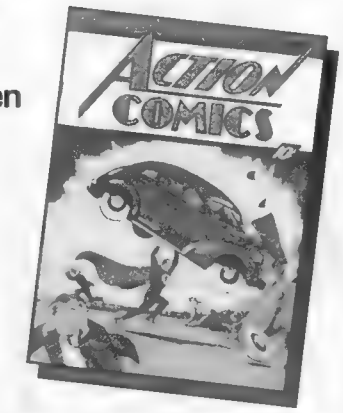

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CALIFORNIA

Oct 22 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Oct 25 CA, City of Industry. Sat. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 10am-5pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Oct 29 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Nov 1 CA, City of Industry. Sat. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 10am-5pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Nov 5 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Nov 7-9 CA, El Segundo-LAX. Old Time Radio Convention, Hacienda Hotel. 525 N. Sepulveda, SH: Fri. 1pm-10pm, Sat. 9am-10am, Sun. 9am-11:30am, T: 20-8', F: $40., A: $135.-$160. SPERDVAC, Bobb Lynes, PO Box 628, South Pasadena, CA 91031. PH: 877-251-5771.

Nov 8 CA, City of Industry. Sat. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 10am-5pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Nov 8-9 CA, Sacramento. Comic Book & Sports Card Show, Sunrise Mall. Sunrise Blvd. at Greenback Ln. (betw. Hwy. 50 & 80), SH: Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 11am-6pm, T: 90, F: $140. for 1, $125. for 3 or more. CA Sports Card Shows, PH: 530-241-4063.

Nov 12 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Nov 15 CA, City of Industry. Sat. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 10am-5pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Nov 19 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

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Nov 26 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Nov 28-30 CA, Dixon-Sacramento. Comic Book & Sports Card Show, Dixon Fairgrounds. Hwy. 113 S off I-80 at cattlemen's, SH: Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm, T: 90, F: $150. for 1, $135. for 3 or more, A: $5. daily, $10. 3-day pass, under 12 free. CA Sports Card Shows, PH: 530-241-4063.

Nov 29 CA, City of Industry. Sat. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 10am-5pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Dec 3 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Dec 6 CA, City of Industry. Sat. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 10am-5pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Dec 10 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Dec 12 CA, San Francisco. Comic Books & Collectibles Show with Jerry Rice & Orlando Cepeda, Cow Palace. Ken Wacker, PH: 707-318-6168.

Dec 13 CA, City of Industry. Sat. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 10am-5pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Dec 14 CA, Sacramento. Comic Book & Collectible Show, Scottish Rite Ctr. 6151 H St., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 80-6' & 8', F: $50.-$60., A: $4. Dan Houck, 6278 Gloria Dr., Sacramento, CA 95831. PH: 916-395-1107.

Dec 17 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Dec 20 CA, City of Industry. Sat. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 10am-5pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Dec 24 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Dec 27 CA, City of Industry. Sat. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 10am-5pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

Dec 31 CA, City of Industry. Wed. Comic Book & Collectible Show. 19649 San Jose Ave, SH: 3:30pm-9:30pm, T: 250, A: free. Frank Zamarripa, 19649 San Jose Ave., City of Industry, CA 91748. PH: 909-444-7955.

CONNECTICUT

Oct 26 CT, East Hartford. Comic Convention, Elks Hall. 148 Roberts St., SH: 11am-5pm, F: $50., A: .99. The Bookie, Hal Kinney, 155 Burnside Ave., East Hartford, CT 06108. PH: 860-289-1208 (afternoons).

Oct 31-Nov 2 CT, Enfield. Collectorfest, Westfield Shoppingtown. I-91 exit 48, T: 60, A: free. Linda Thimell, 169 Elm St., Enfield, CT 06082. PH: 860-749-8702.

Nov 21-23 CT, Meriden. Collectorfest, Westfield Shoppingtown. I-691 exit 6, T: 60, SH: mall hours, A: free. Linda Thimell, 169 Elm St., Enfield, CT 06082. PH: 860-749-8702.

Nov 28-30 CT, Trumbull. Comic Book Show, Westfield Shoppingtown. Merritt Pkwy. Rt. 15, exit 48, SH: mall hours, T: 40, F: $180., A: free. Mike Riccio Sports LLC, Mike Riccio, PO Box 162, Botsford, CT 06404. PH: 203-364-1209.

Nov 30 CT, East Hartford. Comic Convention, Elks Hall. 148 Roberts St., SH: 11am-5pm, F: $50., A: .99. The Bookie, Hal Kinney, 155 Burnside Ave., East Hartford, CT 06108. PH: 860-289-1208 (afternoons).

Dec 28 CT, East Hartford. Comic Convention, Elks Hall. 148 Roberts St., SH: 11am-5pm, F: $50., A: .99. The Bookie, Hal Kinney, 155 Burnside Ave., East Hartford, CT 06108. PH: 860-289-1208 (afternoons).

DELAWARE

Nov 2 DE, Newark. Sports Card, Comic Book & Collectible Show, Aetna Fire Hall. Rt. 273, SH: 10am-3pm, A: $2., 12 & under free. A to Z Promos., Bob Harper, 822 Trophy Way, Bear, DE 19701. PH: 302-438-0967.

Dec 28 DE, Newark. Sports Card, Comic Book & Collectible Show, Aetna Fire Hall. Rt. 273, SH: 10am-3pm, A: $2., 12 & under free. A to Z Promos., Bob Harper, 822 Trophy Way, Bear, DE 19701. PH: 302-438-0967.

FLORIDA

Oct 25 FL, Orlando. Collectible Show, Radisson Barcello Hotel. 8444 International Dr., SH: 10am-5pm, A: free. Charles Cerrito, PH: 954-579-7398.

Nov 1-2 FL, Orlando. COLLECT-A-CON Toys, Comics & Collectibles, Expo Ctr. 500 W. Livingston St., SH: Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 10am-4pm. PH: 407-694-0554 or 402-1336.

Nov 8-9 FL, Plantation. SCREAMFEST, Comic Book, Rock N Roll & Toy Conv., Holiday Inn. 1711 N. University Dr. PH: 954-583-7633.

Nov 9 FL, Tampa. Comic Book & Toy Convention, Doubletree Hotel Tampa Westshore. 4500 W. Cypress St., SH: 10am-5pm, T: 80, F: $60., A: $3., ages 10 & under free. Tim Gordon, PH: 727-522-9032.

Dec 14 FL, Daytona Beach. Comic Book Conv., Ramada Inn Speedway. 1798 W. Int'l. Speedway Blvd., SH: 10am-4pm, A: free. Alan, PH: 309-657-1599.

Dec 27-28 FL, Fort Lauderdale. South FL Weekend Winter Con, Pompano Beach Civic Ctr. 1801 NE 6th St., SH: 10am-5pm, T: 100, A: $6., $10. 2-day pass. Charles Cerrito, PH: 954-579-7398.

Jan 10-11 FL, Orlando. 15th Annual FX Extravaganza Collectible Toy & Comic Book Show, Orange Cty. Convention Ctr. 9800 International Dr., T: 1,100. Marz Prod. Inc., PH: 941-360-6666.

Convention Showcase

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GEORGIA

Nov 16 GA, Atlanta. Comic Convention, Marriott Hotel-Century Ctr. I-85 exit 91, Clairmont Rd., SH: 11am-5pm, T: 66-6', F: $250., A: $4. Wesley Tillander, PO Box 1251, Hogansville, GA 30230. PH: 706-837-4976.

ILLINOIS

Oct 26 IL, Orland Park. Sports Cards & More Show, Civic Center. 147th St., 1 blk. W. La Grange Rd., SH: 9am-2pm, T: 80-6', F: $33., A: $1. John Leary, 9522 W. Shore Dr., Oak Lawn, IL 60453. PH: 708-423-1758.

Oct 26 IL, Bolingbrook. Chicago SW Suburban Comic Book Conv., Holiday Inn. 205 Remington Ave., SH: 10am-4pm, A: free. Alan, PH: 309-657-1599.

Nov 2 IL, Springfield. Comic Book Convention, Signature Inn. 3090 Stevenson Dr., SH: 10am-4pm, A: free. Alan, PH: 309-657-1599.

Nov 2 IL, Bridgeview. Toy Con, Oremus Community Ctr. 7900 S. Oketo Ave., SH: 8:30am-2pm, T: 60, A: $3., 10 & under free. Terry Mannix, PH: 708-237-1645.

Nov 9 IL, Gurnee. Comic Book Convention, Holiday Inn. 6161 W. Grand Ave., SH: 10am-3pm, A: $2. Jim, PH: 847-336-9963.

Nov 16 IL, Orland Park. Sports Cards & More Show, Civic Center. 147th St., 1 blk. W. La Grange Rd., SH: 9am-2pm, T: 80-6', F: $33., A: $1. John Leary, 9522 W. Shore Dr., Oak Lawn, IL 60453. PH: 708-423-1758.

Nov 23 IL, Bridgeview. Comic Book, NASCAR & More Show, Oremus Center. 1 blk. W. of Harlem Ave. at 79th St., SH: 9am-2pm, T: 65-8', F: $35., A: $2. John Leary, 9522 W. Shore Dr., Oak Lawn, IL 60453. PH: 708-423-1758.

Nov 28-30 IL, Arlington Heights. Chicago Tardis-40 Years of Doctor Who, Sheraton Chicago Northwest. 3400 W. Euclid Ave., SH: Fri. 9am-9pm, Sat. 9am-11pm, Sun. 9am-5pm, A: $30.-$35. 1 day pass, $50.-$60. 3 day pass. Alien Entertainment, PO Box 2660, Glen Ellyn, IL 60138. PH: 630-790-0905.

Nov 29 IL, Orland Park. Sports Cards & More Show, Civic Center. 147th St., 1 blk. W. La Grange Rd., SH: 9am-2pm, T: 80-6', F: $33., A: $1. John Leary, 9522 W. Shore Dr., Oak Lawn, IL 60453. PH: 708-423-1758.

Dec 13 IL, Orland Park. Sports Cards & More Show, Civic Center. 147th St., 1 blk. W. La Grange Rd., SH: 9am-2pm, T: 80-6', F: $33., A: $1. John Leary, 9522 W. Shore Dr., Oak Lawn, IL 60453. PH: 708-423-1758.

Dec 14 IL, Bridgeview. Toy Con, Oremus Community Ctr. 7900 S. Oketo Ave., SH: 8:30am-2pm, T: 60, A: $3., 10 & under free. Terry Mannix, PH: 708-237-1645.

Dec 28 IL, Orland Park. Sports Cards & More Show, Civic Center. 147th St., 1 blk. W. La Grange Rd., SH: 9am-2pm, T: 80-6', F: $33., A: $1. John Leary, 9522 W. Shore Dr., Oak Lawn, IL 60453. PH: 708-423-1758.

INDIANA

Oct 25 IN, South Bend. Michiana Comicon, Holy Family Hall. Mayflower at Western, SH: 10am-4pm, T: 45-8', F: $40., A: $1. Jim Rossow, 53100 Poppy Rd., South Bend, IN 46628. PH: 574-232-8129.

Nov 8-9 IN, Elkhart. Sports Card & Collectible Conv., Pierre Moran Mall. 154 W. Hively Ave., SH: Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 12noon-5pm, T: 45-8', A: free. Dave Brody, PO Box 724, South Bend, IN 46624. PH: 219-272-9198 or Ken Gaipa, PH: 219-389-9962.

Nov 9 IN, Indianapolis. Comic Book & Toy Show, Holiday Inn East. 6990 E. 21st St., SH: 9:30am-3:30pm, T: 65-6', F: $70. for 1, $140. for 3, A: $4. Ash Comics & Shows, Andy Holzman, 1947 Bechtel Rd., Indianapolis, IN 46260. PH: 317-334-0173 or 824-9602.

Nov 21-23 IN, Indianapolis. Gamefest, State Fairgrounds. 1202 E. 38th St. Advantage Conv. Serv., PO Box 1128, Antwerp, OH 45813. PH: 419-258-1780, FAX: 419-258-1870.

IOWA

Dec 6 IA, Council Bluffs. Comic Book Convention, Best Western Crossroads. 2216 27th Ave., SH: 10am-4pm, A: free. Alan, PH: 309-657-1599.

Dec 7 IA, Des Moines. Comic Book Conv., Holiday Inn. 5000 Merle Hay Rd. SH: 10am-4pm, A: free. Alan, PH: 309-657-1599.

KANSAS

Nov 15-16 KS, Shawnee. ComiCon, Civic Centre. 11837 Johnson Dr., SH: Sat. 10am-5pm, Sun. 10am-4pm, T: 70-6', F: $125.-$150, A: $5., under 7 free. PH: 816-924-1566.

Dec 27 KS, Shawnee. Comic Book Convention, Hampton Inn. I-435 at Midland Dr. exit, SH: 10am-4pm, A: free. Ken, PH: 913-764-8888.

MARYLAND

Oct 26 MD, Glen Burnie. Comic Book & Non-Sports Card Show, Holiday Inn. 6323 Ritchie Hwy., Exit 3A off I-695, SH: 11am-4pm, A: $2.50, under 7 free. Fred Edeson, PH: 410-569-8357.

Nov 6-9 MD, Hanover. Toys, Comic Books, Diecast & Sports Card Show, Arundel Mills Mall. Stackhouse Events, Pat Stackhouse, 625 8th Ave., Prospect Park, PA 19076. PH: 302-345-7208 or 610-461-1830.

MASSACHUSETTS

Nov 16 MA, South Attleboro. Comic Book, Toys, Non-Sports Card & Collectable Show, Knights of Columbus. 304 Highland Ave., Rt. 123, SH: 10am-3pm, T: 59, A: $3., under 16 free. Harry Martin, 936 South St., Wrentham, MA 02093. PH: 508-384-8491.

Nov 22-23 MA, Framingham. Boston Super Megafest, Sheraton Hotel. 1657 Worcester Rd, MA Pike exit 12 K&S Promos., John DiCicco, 57 Bay View Dr., Shrewsbury, MA 01545. PH: 800-505-8697 or 201-261-4982.

Dec 7 MA, Boston. Comic Book & Toy Spectacular, Radisson Hotel. Formerly Howard Johnson 57, 200 Stuart St., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 120-8', F: $95., A: $5. Monkey House Entertainment, David Cummings, PH: 978-388-6576.

MICHIGAN

Nov 8 MI, Livonia. Encore Con, Elks 2246. 31117 Plymouth Rd., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 50, F: $45. in advance, $50. day of show, A: $3., ages 6 & under free. Motor City Conventions, Michael Goldman or Gary Bishop, 19785 W. 12 Mile Rd. PMB 231, Southfield, MI 48076. PH: 248-426-8059.

Nov 21-23 MI, Livonia. Sports Card, Comic Book, Coin, Collectible Show, Livonia Mall. 7 Mile & Middlebelt, SH: Fri. & Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 11am-5pm, T: 80, F: $80. for 1, $150. for 2, A: free. Bruce Mugerian Show Promos., PH: 248-788-1178.

Dec 12-13 MI, Livonia. Sports Card, Comic Book, Coin, Collectible Show, Livonia Mall. 7 Mile & Middlebelt, SH: Fri. & Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 11am-5pm, T: 80, F: $80. for 1, $150. for 2, A: free. Bruce Mugerian Show Promos., PH: 248-788-1178.

Dec 27 MI, Livonia. Encore Con, Elks 2246. 31117 Plymouth Rd., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 50, F: $45. in advance, $50. day of show, A: $3., ages 6 & under free. Motor City Conventions, Michael Goldman or Gary Bishop, 19785 W. 12 Mile Rd. PMB 231, Southfield, MI 48076. PH: 248-426-8059.

Dec 27-28 MI, Madison Heights. Collectable Comic Book Show, UFCW Union Hall Local 876. 876 Horace Brown Dr., SH: 9am-3pm. Classic Prod., Joseph Pellegrino, PO Box 472, Fraser, MI 48026. PH: 586-775-3289 or 790-6290.

MISSOURI

Oct 26 MO, Shrewsbury. Comic Book Show, Memorial Post Hall Unit 111. 7300 Lansdowne, SH: 10:30am-3pm, T: 40, F: $30., A: $2. Anthony Gladish, 4253 Fatima Dr. #3, Saint Louis, MO 63123. PH: 314-544-2812.

Nov 14-16 MO, Kansas City. Comic Books & Collectibles Show, Metro North Mall. 400 NW Barry Rd., SH: Fri.-Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 12noon-6pm, T: 55-8', F: $100., A: free. D&S Collectibles, Donnie Hall, 3917 Cambridge Crossing Dr., St. Charles, MO 63304. PH: 816-560-8180.

Nov 23 MO, Shrewsbury. Comic Book Show, Memorial Post Hall Unit 111. 7300 Lansdowne, SH: 10:30am-3pm, T: 40, F: $30., A: $2. Anthony Gladish, 4253 Fatima Dr. #3, Saint Louis, MO 63123. PH: 314-544-2812.

Dec 28 MO, Chesterfield. Comic Book Convention, Hampton Inn & Stes. 5 McBride & Son Ctr. Dr., SH: 10am-4pm, A: free. Alan, PH: 309-657-1599.

NEVADA

Oct 31-Nov 3 NV, Las Vegas. " Extrosion" Comic Con, Mandalay Bay Convention Ctr. Las Vegas Comic Con, PH: 866-36-COMIC (26642).

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Nov 2 NH, Concord. Comic Book, Card & Collectible Toy Halloween Bash, Holiday Inn. Exit 14 off I-93, SH: 10am-3pm, A: $5. Michael, PH: 781-254-6394.

NEW JERSEY

Oct 24-26 NJ, Rockaway. Triple Play Comic Book, Sports Card, Memorabilia & Collectible Toy Show, Townsquare Mall. Rt. 80 & Mount Hope Ave., SH: mall hours, T: 65-8', F: $125.-$175. for 1, $340. for 2, $490. for 3, A: free. F&B Sport Cards, Inc., Ferdinand Parascandolo, 482 Retford Ave., Staten Island, NY 10312. PH: 718-967-9172 or 732-786-8810.

Nov 2 NJ, Wayne. Comic Book & Collectibles Show, Co. #1 Firemen's Conv. Ctr. 1 Parish Dr. off Rt. 23 N., Lincoln Park Exit, SH: 8:30am-3pm, T: 80, A: $1, under 12 free. Phil De Mario, PO Box 4094, Wayne, NJ 07474. PH: 973-726-9897.

Nov 9 NJ, Clifton. Comic Book Expo, Recreation Ctr. 1232 Main Ave., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 30-6', F: $50., A: free. / J. Paul, 10 Cross St., Montclair, NJ 07042. PH: 973-783-0608.

Nov 15 NJ, Jackson. Comic Book, Memorabilia & Sports Card Show, VFW. SH: 9am-3pm. Shari or Jeff, PH: 732-833-9224.

Nov 22-23 NJ, Bordentown. Comic Book Show, Armory. Rt. 206, SH: 9:30am-3:30pm, T: 50, F: $90., A: $2. RK Promos., Rob or Karen Gornberg, 3 Rachel Ct., Franklin Park, NJ 08823. PH: 732-422-9365 or Mike Leon, PH: 215-396-8016.

Dec 7 NJ, Wayne. Comic Book & Collectibles Show, Co. #1 Firemen's Conv. Ctr. 1 Parish Dr. off Rt. 23 N., Lincoln Park Exit, SH: 8:30am-3pm, T: 80, A: $1, under 12 free. Phil De Mario, PO Box 4094, Wayne, NJ 07474. PH: 973-726-9897.

Dec 14 NJ, Clifton. Comic Book Expo, Recreation Ctr. 1232 Main Ave., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 30-6', F: $50., A: free. / J. Paul, 10 Cross St., Montclair, NJ 07042. PH: 973-783-0608.

Jan 4 NJ, Wayne. Comic Book & Collectibles Show, Co. #1 Firehouse. 1 Parish Dr. off Rt. 23 N., Lincoln Park Exit, SH: 8am-3pm, T: 80, A: $1, under 12 free. Phil De Mario, PO Box 4094, Wayne, NJ 07474. PH: 973-726-9897.

NEW YORK

Oct 26 NY, Syracuse. Collectorsfest, State Fairgrounds-Horticultural Bldg. State Fair Blvd., Rt. 690 exit 7, SH: 10am-4pm, T: 250-8', A: $3., under 10 free. CNY Promos., 35 Hubbard St. Ste 1, Cortland, NY 13045. PH: 607-753-8580 (eves.).

Oct 26 NY, Brooklyn. Comic Book & Collectible Show, Golden Gate Inn. Knapp St. & Shore Pkwy., SH: 9am-3pm, A: free. Mark, PH: 718-266-1625.

Nov 9 NY, Brooklyn. Comic Book & Collectible Show, Golden Gate Inn. Knapp St. & Shore Pkwy., SH: 9am-3pm, A: free. Mark, PH: 718-266-1625.

Nov 16 NY, Rochester. CollectorFest, The Party House. 677 Beahan Rd., SH: 10am-3pm, T: 30-8', F: $40., A: free. Ernie's Cards, Ernest Orlando, 264 Park Ave. Rear Apt., Rochester, NY 14607. PH: 585-241-3198.

Nov 23 NY, Brooklyn. Comic Book & Collectible Show, Golden Gate Inn. Knapp St. & Shore Pkwy., SH: 9am-3pm, A: free. Mark, PH: 718-266-1625.

Nov 28-30 NY, New York City. 5th Annual National Comic Book, Art & Toys Show, Metropolitan Pavilion. 125 W. 18th St., T: 100. PH: 201-569-2011 or FAX: 201-865-3288.

Dec 6 NY, New York City. Collectors Fest Sports Cards, CD's, Records, Tapes, Videos, Mem., Comic Books & More Show, Holy Cross School. 332 W. 43rd St., SH: 10am-5pm, F: $40. for 1, $70. for 2, A: $3. Gary Lyons, PH: 718-972-3872.

Dec 7 NY, Brooklyn. Comic Book & Collectible Show, Golden Gate Inn. Knapp St. & Shore Pkwy., SH: 9am-3pm, A: free. Mark, PH: 718-266-1625.

Dec 21 NY, Brooklyn. Comic Book & Collectible Show, Golden Gate Inn. Knapp St. & Shore Pkwy., SH: 9am-3pm, A: free. Mark, PH: 718-266-1625.

Dec 21 NY, Rochester. CollectorFest, The Party House. 677 Beahan Rd., SH: 10am-3pm, T: 30-8', F: $40., A: free. Ernie's Cards, Ernest Orlando, 264 Park Ave. Rear Apt., Rochester, NY 14607. PH: 585-241-3198.

Jan 4 NY, Melville-Long Island. Collectibles Show. 585 Route 110, SH: 9am-3pm, T: 57, A: free. George Schultheis, PO Box 1654, Seaford, NY 11783. PH: 516-804-0047 or 361-9503.

NORTH CAROLINA

Oct 25-26 NC, Concord. Comic Book, Sports Card, Records, Toys, Coins & More Show, Carolina Mall. I-85 exit 58, SH: Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 1pm-6pm, T: 60, F: $50., A: free. Mike Dentino, 849 9th Ave. Pl. NE, Hickory, NC 28601. PH: 828-328-1029.

Oct 31-Nov 2 NC, Statesville. Sports Card, Comic Book & Collectibles Show, Signal Hill Mall. I-77 exit 50, SH: Fri. & Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 1pm-6pm, T: 60, F: $60., A: free. Mike Dentino, 849 9th Ave. Pl. NE, Hickory, NC 28601. PH: 828-328-1029.

Dec 5-7 NC, Salisbury. Comic Book, Sports Card, Records, Toys, Coins & More Show, Mall. I-85 exit 76, SH: Fri. & Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 1pm-6pm, T: 60, F: $60., A: free. Mike Dentino, 849 9th Ave. Pl. NE, Hickory, NC 28601. PH: 828-328-1029.

Dec 7 NC, Raleigh. Comix Con, Clarion Hotel. 4501 Creedmoor Rd., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 23-6', F: $70., A: free. Lyn Anderson, PO Box 99201, Raleigh, NC 27624. PH: 919-844-1758.

OHIO

Nov 2 OH, Mansfield. Comic Books, Toys & Collectibles Show, Richland Co. Fairgrounds. Trimble Rd. Exit off US Rt. 30, SH: 10am-4pm, T: 140-160. Kevin Spore, PO Box 3603, Mansfield, OH 44907. PH: 419-756-3904 after 4pm or Tim Babcock, PH: 419-884-3253.

Nov 2 OH, Cleveland. Saturdays Child Nostalgia Convention, Holiday Inn-Richfield. 4742 Brecksville Rd., SH: 10am-3pm, T: 35-6', F: $55., A: $2., ages 6 & under free. Jeff Harper, 5220 Loma Linda NE, Canton, OH 44714. PH: 330-499-6056.

Nov 29-30 OH, Columbus. Mid-Ohio-Con, Hilton Hotel. Easton Town Ctr., SH: Sat. 10am-6pm, Sun. 10am-5pm, T: 150, A: $15. R.A.P. Promos., Roger Price, PO Box 3831, Mansfield, OH 44907. PH: 419-526-1427.

PENNSYLVANIA

Oct 24-26 PA, Pittsburg. Toys, Comic Books, Diecast & Sports Card Show, Century III Mall. Stackhouse Events, Pat Stackhouse, 625 8th Ave., Prospect Park, PA 19076. PH: 302-345-7208 or 610-461-1830.

Nov 14-16 PA, Allentown. Toys, Comic Books, Diecast & Sports Card Show, PA Expo Center. Stackhouse Events, Pat Stackhouse, 625 8th Ave., Prospect Park, PA 19076. PH: 302-345-7208 or 610-461-1830.

Dec 6 PA, Allentown. Lehigh Valley Comic Con, Schnecksville Fire Co. 4550 Old Packerhouse Rd., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 60-8', F: $60. for 1st, $50. for 2nd, $40. for 3rd, A: $3., 12 & under free. Lance Hawk, 1290 Vermont Ave., Allentown, PA 18103. PH: 610-797-3357.

Dec 6-7 PA, Pittsburgh. Comic & Toy Convention, Expo Mart at Monroeville Mall. Bus. Rt. 22, Monroeville, Exit 6 PA Tpke., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 450-6', A: $5., $3., under 12. D. Alessandria, 456 Old Farm Ln., Johnstown, PA 15904. PH: 877-967-1500.

Dec 14 PA, Philadelphia. Comic-Con, Stadium Holiday Inn. 10th St. & Packer Ave. (I-95 exit 19 or I-76 exit 350), SH: 10am-4pm, T: 50-6', F: $70. for 1, $135. for 2, A: $3. Derek Woywood, PO Box 313, Clementon, NJ 08021. PH: 856-782-0817.

TENNESSEE

Nov 8 TN, Johnson City. Comic Book, Toy & Heroclix Con, Holiday Inn. 101 W. Springbrook Dr., SH: 10am-5pm, F: $50. for 1, $120. for 3, A: $2. PH: 423-282-3164 or 232-6711.

Nov 16 TN, Knoxville. Comic Con, Holiday Inn Select. Cedar Bluff Rd., I-40 exit 378, SH: 10am-4pm, T: 40, A: $2. Steve Riley, 2920 Brock Ave., Knoxville, TN 37919. PH: 865-455-8410.

TEXAS

Oct 25-26 TX, Plano. Dallas Comic Con & Toy Show, Plano Ctr. 2000 E. Spring Creek Pkwy., SH: Sat. 11am-6pm, Sun. 12noon-5pm, T: 250. PH: 972-420-8639.

Nov 8-9 TX, Austin. Collectors Expo, Crockett Ctr. 6301 Hwy. 290 E., SH: Sat. 9am-5pm, Sun. 10am-4pm, A: $3. good for both days, under 6 free. Sally Wallace, 6702 Lexington Rd., Austin, TX 78757. PH: 512-454-9882.

Nov 22 TX, San Antonio-Live Oak. Sports Card, Comic Book & Toy Show, Civic Center. Pat Booker Rd., I-35 & Hwy. 1604, SH: 9am-5pm, T: 100-8', F: $40., A: $2., under 13 free. Eckman's Books & Collectibles, Dale E. Eckman, 8050 Pioneer Oak, Converse, TX 78109. PH: 210-945-0003.

Jan 9-10 TX, Austin. TX Superhero & SciFi Collectors Expo, Crockett Ctr. 6301 Hwy. 290, SH: Fri. 12noon-6pm, Sat. 9am-6pm, T: 100, A: $8.50 for 1 day, $12.50 for 2 days. PH: 512-396-2845.

Jan 17 2004 TX, San Antonio-Live Oak. Sports Card, Comic Book & Toy Show, Civic Center. Pat Booker Rd., I-35 & Hwy. 1604, SH: 9am-5pm, T: 100-8', F: $40., A: $2., under 13 free. Eckman's Books & Collectibles, Dale E. Eckman, 8050 Pioneer Oak, Converse, TX 78109. PH: 210-945-0003.

VIRGINIA

Oct 24-26 VA, Newport News. Sports Cards, Comic Book & Toy Show, Patrick Henry Mall. Jefferson Ave., SH: Fri. & Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 12:30pm-5:30pm, T: 40-8', A: free. Space Travelers Comics & Promos., Tom, PO Box 1446, Harrisonburg, VA 22803. PH: 540-432-6771.

Oct 26 VA, Richmond. Comicon, Comfor Inn & Conf. Ctr. 3200 W. Broad St., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 50-6', F: $75., A: $3., under 6 free. Star City Events, 5623 Williamson Rd. NW, Roanoke, VA 24012. PH: 540-767-4263.

Oct 31-Nov 2 VA, Christiansburg. Sports Cards, Comic Book & Toy Show, New River Mall. SH: Fri. & Sat. 10am-9pm, Sun. 1pm-6pm, T: 40-8', A: free. Space Travelers Comics & Promos., Tom, PO Box 1446, Harrisonburg, VA 22803. PH: 540-432-6771.

Nov 1 VA, Tysons Corner-Fairfax. Comic Book & Non-Sports Card Show, Holiday Inn. I-495 exit 46A, SH: 10am-4pm, T: 45-6', F: $65., A: $3. Shoff Promos., Nick Shoff, 5904 Willow Knoll Dr., Derwood, MD 20855. PH: 301-990-4029.

Nov 23 VA, Richmond. CRCC Fall Show, Holiday Inn Crossroads. 2000 Staples Mill Rd., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 35, F: $65., A: $2. Chesterfield Comic Collectors, Guy Rose, 6413 Old Bern Rd., Chesterfield, VA 23832. PH: 804-796-4903.

Dec 7 VA, Tysons Corner-McLean. CapiCons.com Comic Book, Sports Card & Toy Show, Westpark Hotel. 8401 Westpark Dr., SH: 10am-4pm, T: 80-6', F: $95. for 1st, $90. for 2nd, $85. ea. add'l., A: $3., under 5 free. Jeff Rocen, 906 S. Kenwood Ave., Baltimore, MD 21224. PH: 703-912-1993 or 800-222-2057.

WASHINGTON

Nov 16 WA, Seattle. ComiCard Convention, Seattle Ctr. NW Rooms. 101 Republican St., SH: 10am-5pm, T: 80-8', F: $85., A: $6. Steve Miner, PO Box 55853, Seattle, WA 98155. PH: 206-365-1207.

WISCONSIN

Nov 23 WI, West Allis. Comic Book Convention, Burnham Bowl. 6016 W. Burnham Ave., SH: 11am-4pm. Clayton Dietl, PH: 414-328-3675.

CANADA

Nov 7-9 ON, Toronto. Comicon, Queen Elizabeth Bldg. Exhibition Pl., SH: Fri. 4pm-9pm, Sat. 10am-7pm, Sun. 10am-5pm. Paradise Comics, PH: 416-487-9807.

U.S. Postal Service Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication Title: Comics Buyer's Guide
2. Publication No.: 0745-4570
3. Filing Date: October 1, 2003
4. Issue Frequency: Weekly
5. No. of issues published annually: 52
6. Annual subscription price: $38.95
7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: Krause Publications, 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990-0001. Contact Person: Peggy Morey: (715) 445-2214
8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: Same.
9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher: Mark Williams, 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990-0001. Editor: Maggie Thompson, 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990-0001. Managing Editor: n/a.
10. Owner (If owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1% or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address: F&W Publications, Inc., 4700 E. Galbraith Road, Cincinnati, OH 45236.
11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders: None.
12. Tax status: Unchanged.
13. Publication Title: Comics Buyer's Guide
14. Issue date for circulation data below: July 25, 2003.
15. Extent and nature of circulation:

A. Total number of copies printed (net press run): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 8,794. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 9,300.

B. Paid and/or requested circulation: 1) Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions stated on Form 3541: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 6,323. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 6,125. 2) Paid in-county subscriptions: n/a. 3) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS paid distribution: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 981. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 865. 4) Other classes mailed through the USPS: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 27. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 27.

C. Total paid and/or requested circulation (sum of 15B(1), 15B(2), 15B(3), and 15B(4): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 7,331. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 7,017.

D. Free distribution by mail (samples, complimentary copies, and other free): 1) Outside-county as stated on Form 3541: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 435. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 173. 2) In-County as stated on Form 3541: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0. 3) Other classes mailed through the USPS: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0.

E. Free distribution outside the mail: Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 155. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 1,134.

F. Total free distribution (sum of 15D and 15E): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 590. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 1,307.

G. Total distribution (sum of 15C and 15F): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 7,921. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 8,324.

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J. Percent paid and/or requested circulation (15C/15G x 100): Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 92.6%. Number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 84.3%.

16. Publication of statement of ownership: Publication required. Will be printed in the October 31, 2003 issue of this publication.
17. Signature and title of editor, publisher, business manager, or owner: Mark Williams, Publisher, Sept. 30, 2003.

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$2 COMICS Ironman V-Fine N-Mint 122, 132, 135, 139-143, 145, 147-150. Marvel Premiere V-F Mint, 36-43, 47-55. Postage $3. Kuzner, 1806 W 4th St, Dunellen, NJ 08812.

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Jeepers creepers

Jack Larson, who played Jimmy Olsen on *The Adventures of Superman*, also had a brief recording career in 1958 and 1959. His biggest hit was a gimmick song called "Roaches."

Radio icons meet

Morphing Period author Richard Thatcher related this story an Army friend told him. One base had a brass hat whose last name was Midnight. One evening, he came to guard post, and the call went out: "Who goes there?" The reply was "Captain Midnight!" and the sentry fired back "Yeah, and I'm The Shadow!"

What a fan!

The New Adventures of Superboy #23 (Nov 81) was a key issue, as the lead story concerned itself with a visit to the Old West by Superboy. In the course of the story, he encountered the alien who would adopt his future enemy Terra Man. But it was also noteworthy for a letter in the "Smallville Mailsack." One line read, "The overall art by Kurt Schaffenberger and Dave Hunt could not have been done better by anyone else." The letter was signed by Todd McFarlane.

- Mike Curtis

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Four words Peter never thought he'd say:

"Bill Jemas was right"

By **Peter David**

I'm not a big fan of selling out.

I'm not referring to artistic selling out. In that regard, I'm reminded of the oft-recounted anecdote involving the crew guy during the filming of *The Prince and the Showgirl* who asked Laurence Olivier — arguably the greatest actor of his age — why he was wasting his talents co-starring with Marilyn Monroe in such a piece of fluff. And Olivier smiled and said, "For the money, dear boy." The unreasonable personal sense of betrayal that fans feel when a creative type makes a decision that provides major commercial success is a subject for another time.

No, I'm speaking of comic books selling out.

It seems to be happening a lot lately, do you notice that? If you're a follower of online news sites, you know it's occurring all the time.

I've had issues sell out any number of times in my career. *Hulk: The End* blew out of the stores. Won a *Wizard* Award for Best One-Shot; you can't find it anywhere save eBay. The first several issues of the "Many Happy Returns" storyline in *Supergirl* evaporated from the shelves. As opposed to other titles which sold out, DC was kind of mum about that — probably because, since they'd gone ahead and canceled it thanks to the low up-front numbers, they didn't want to look like schmucks. Selling out is supposed to represent a success story, not underscore a blown opportunity. (*Supergirl,* between #74 and #80, had a unit sales increase of between 40% and 50% and jumped 35 spaces in the Diamond ranking — hardly indicative of a title doing so poorly it should be pulled.)

The problem is that, to me, selling out is never good news. Because to me it means lost opportunities. When no more copies can be sold, no more readers can acquire the title, and — for the publisher — it means no more money can be made. It's a worldview likely shaped by my time at Marvel direct sales, when I hated to disappoint distributors who were trying to keep up with demand on some new hot book. My fans know my crabby attitude about it. When Dreamwave announced the first issue of the animated tie-in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* had sold out, denizens of my website posted, "Congratulations ... or condolences, whichever." Truth to tell, these days even I'm not sure any more.

But why is DC now making a point of ballyhooing every sellout of a title it wants to push? Surely, this is nothing new. Surely, it can't be it's never sold out of books before.

Of course it has. And when it's sold out on hot books, the company has printed more. It's been retailer supportive and generally accommodating. And what has it gotten for that?

Screwed.

When you contrast Marvel to DC in the past few years, you've had the classic example of Bad Cop/Good Cop. The bad cop works you over, and then the good cop comes in and you're so happy to be treated decently that you'll form a bond with him.

Well, that didn't work. Because the retailers bonded with the bad cop.

Here's four words I never thought I'd say: Bill Jemas was right.

Bill Jemas went out there and insulted the retailers and said, in effect, that retailers were too dumb to comprehend Marvel's game plan when it came to refusing to overprint desired books. And retailers howled and shouted and protested and cried foul.

"After publicly presenting itself as the alternative to the abusive Marvel partner, DC now can't turn around and imitate Marvel's no reprint/ no overprint policy."

And they sobbed on DC's shoulder, and DC patted them and said, "It's OK, we love you, we'll take care of you," and the retailers said, "Thanks for listening," and then went ahead and did exactly what Marvel wanted them to, while screwing DC to the wall.

If you've ever seen a woman trapped in an abusive relationship, you wonder how she lets herself get into such a situation. If you're interested to know, you've actually seen the dynamics of such a relationship played out in the commercial venue of comic books. Marvel engaged the retailers in a classic abusive relationship. It berated them and withheld approval and support. Did the retailers abandon Marvel? Did they seek comfort in the arms of others? Did they rise up and demand that their dignity be respected? Heck, no. They took it and came back for more, because, just as an abused wife needs what her abusive husband has to offer, so, too, did the retailers need what Marvel was providing. And Marvel, secure in the abuser position, knew it.

And DC watched, jaw dropping, as its continued support for retailers resulted in its being taken for granted. Did retailers join together and slash their Marvel orders to the bone and "reward" DC for its support? Of course not. They did exactly what the abusive partner expected them to do: They started increasing their Marvel orders, because they were afraid they wouldn't be able to meet consumer demand.

The problem is that retailers — the smart ones, at any rate — operate on a budget. They can afford to order so many books and no more. So, if they were upping their Marvel orders, they had to cut something else. What'd they cut back on? DC books. Why? Because they knew how accommodating DC was and figured there would always be reorders available and, if the book turned hot, DC would go back to press. So a stupefied DC sat and watched its numbers erode while Marvel's increased (with retailers crabbing all the way), and somewhere Bill Jemas was laughing his butt off.

And it gets better. What I've heard anecdotally is that, since retailers were light-ordering DC titles, the DC titles would sell out, and customers with extra money who couldn't find a DC title would try out Marvel books which the retailer had over-ordered on.

So now DC's in a little bit of a situation, isn't it? After publicly presenting itself as the alternative to the abusive Marvel partner, DC now can't turn around and imitate Marvel's no reprint/no overprint policy. And it's not Paul Levitz' style to openly challenge or insult the IQ of retailers (although, if he was privately wondering about it, I wouldn't be surprised).

But DC had to send *some* kind of message, didn't it? Like the microscopic Whos desperately endeavoring to save themselves from being cooked by letting the jungle animals know, "We are here! We are here! *We are here!*" DC had to let retailers know that the Good Cop was seriously considering dipping his toes into the Bad Cop side of the pool.

Hence the incessant press releases. "This issue is sold out." "That issue is sold out." What's even more important than the titles selling is the message that's being sold, as well: "Our books are hot. We can't keep them in stock. Demand is outstripping supply."

And, unlike such pronouncements from a year ago, many of these initial releases make no mention whatsoever of reprints. DC isn't quite treating retailers like piñatas, smacking them around in hopes of cracking them. It is, however, leaving them dangling from the ceiling that much longer. Twisting in the wind.

My guess is that this will continue until retailers get the message — the message being: Hey, we're not going to be taken for granted any more. We're not going to be the nice guys any more.

Because we know where nice guys finish. ✦

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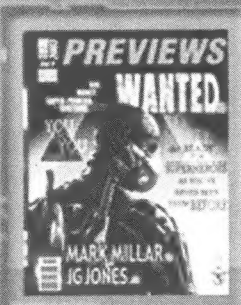

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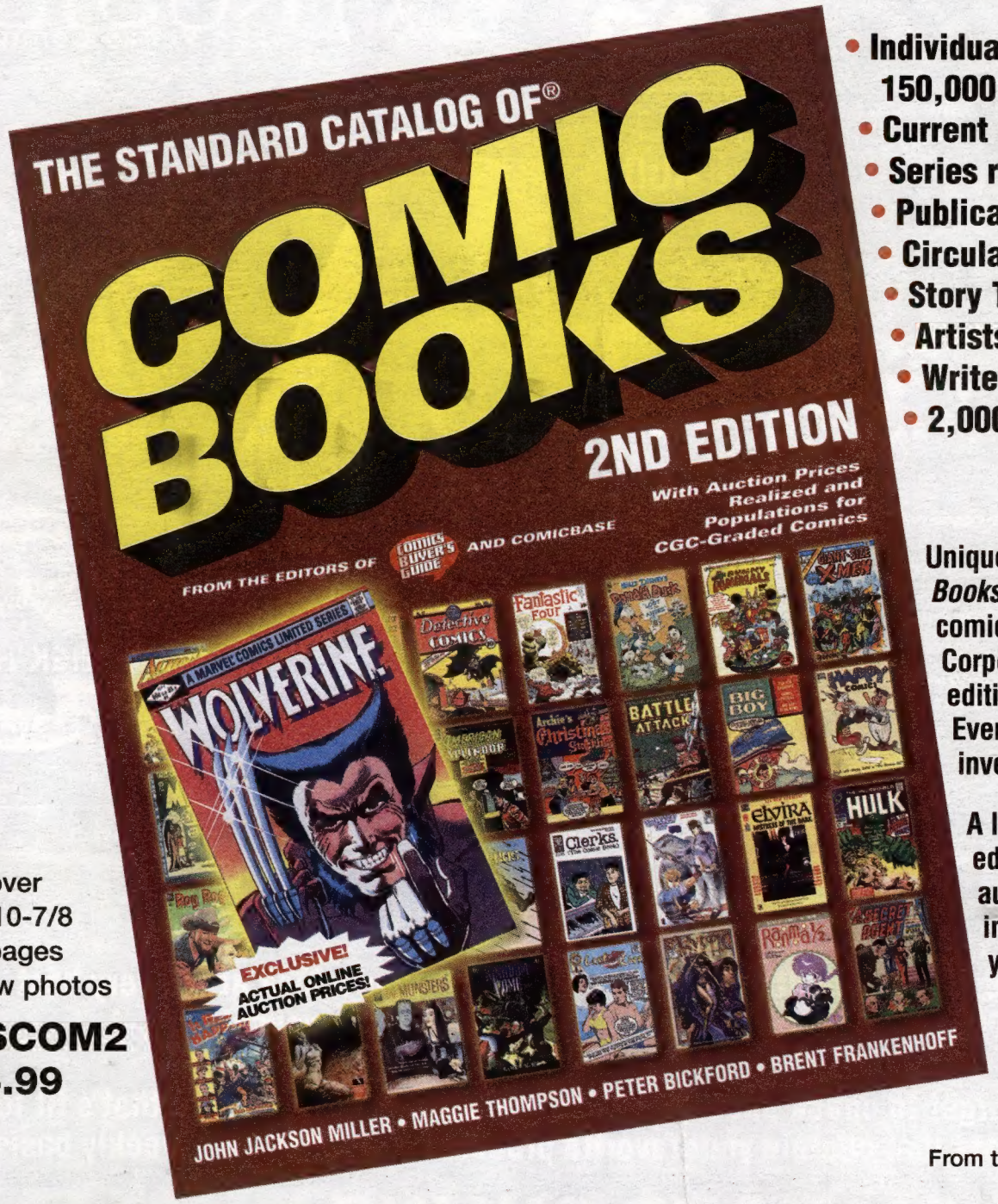
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